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JOHN MANAGED TO SEIZE THE BRIDLE AND CHECK THE ANIMAL'S MAD CAREER.

## AT LAST. [A NOVELETTE.]

### CHAPTER I.

The sun was setting in regal, glorious splendour; golden, purple, pink, and red clouds were fading slowly and gently from the Western sky.

"The day is done, and the darkness  
Falls from the wings of night."

The day was dying, shrouding itself in the growing twilight that crept up, almost imperceptibly, so gradual was the change from light to shade, from effulgence to dim dusk. The shadows grew each moment longer and darker, as the sun-god sank down behind a great hill standing to the right of Caple-le-Bretel Rectory, and the golden light died off from the old white house, creeping up and up, lingering on its red

roof and queer-twisted chimneys for awhile, and then leaving it in gloom, as deep as that in which the ancient church hard by and its graveyard was steeped.

By the wicket-gate leading from the Rectory grounds to the graveyard stood two figures, those of a man and a girl. The former stood with one foot on a rail; both hands clasped over the muzzle of his gun, and both eyes fixed on his companion's face; the latter, with slightly bent head, toyed with a huge bunch of glowing, scarlet poppies, the colour of the gay petticoat she wore, over which was bunched and draped a pretty but fantastic cotton, curious in the extreme yet undoubtedly becoming to its wearer, whose slight figure it showed off to perfection.

She did not seem in the least embarrassed by, or, indeed, conscious of, the steady stare with which she was favoured. Had she been, she doubtless would have noted the extremely tender look in her companion's clear grey eyes, that seemed to drink in, as it were, all the soft, young fairness of the face beside him, with its

irregular features, but full of great mobility of expression, bright brown hair, and large dark eyes to match.

She was childishly arranging the brilliant blooms, tossing those she did not fancy at Lassie, the red collie that lay on the grass at her feet, or at Noble, the setter, who sat gravely on his haunches, close to his master's heels.

He watched her with a hardly suppressed eagerness of manner, that argued he took a great interest in her, which he was at no pains whatever to conceal, and that he did not in the least mind the whole world knowing, always supposing the whole world cared to know the interesting fact.

"Have you arranged those to your satisfaction at last?" he asked, as she put the finishing touches to the posy.

"At last; yes, I think I have," she returned, with a quick, upward glance of the brown eyes, and a little, rippling laugh, like the far-off murmur of a running brook. "But why 'at last!'"

"You have been such a long time over it."

"Pooh! John!" she retorted with a pretty moue.

"Why pooh?"

"I haven't been five minutes over the arrangement."

"Poppy, that's a fib."

"I am sure it is not."

"Oh! I am a bit of a one, but—"

"But you mean to say," she interrupted, with another little laugh, "that—"

"That," he interrupted, in his turn, "I did not once see those extremely ugly eyes of yours for twenty minutes."

"John!"

"It is a fact, I assure you."

"Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes!" he mocked. "I timed you. You kept your eyelids down for more than a quarter of an hour."

"What a dreadful thing for you!"

"It was," he agreed, emphatically; "a very dreadful thing. I felt inclined to take those flowers out of your hand and fling them away."

"Why?" she demanded, surprise plainly visible in the brown orbs.

"Because I wanted you to look at me."

"What for?"

"That I might see your eyes."

"But," she said, gravely and slowly, as though considering some weighty question, "if they are, as you say, extremely ugly, why do you want to see them?"

"Because I am used to seeing them," he returned, coolly, "and it is just as easy to be accustomed to looking at an ugly thing as at a pretty one."

"Really?"

"Yes, really."

"I should never think that."

"Wouldn't you?"

"No. And John," she went on, quite seriously, "you know you need not look at them unless you like."

"No," he asked, inquiringly, with aggravating coolness.

"No," she rejoined, a trifle sharply. "There are Nancy Partridge's pretty blue ones. You can study them."

"Thank you, Poppy, but I prefer studying your ugly brown ones."

"But I shall not allow you to look at them if you depreciate them," she rejoined, with a little toss of the brown head that barely reached to his shoulder, so tall and stalwart was he.

"Oh, yes, you will!" he returned, with ready humility. "I'll declare they are the loveliest I have ever seen rather than be banished from their neighbourhood."

"I am afraid you are somewhat of a hypocrite, Mr. Delbrook," returned the little lady, with stately indignation.

"I am not, indeed, Miss Caulfield," he expostulated, humbly; and don't be angry with me, and I'll let you into a secret."

"Probably it is one that I don't want or wish to be let into," she declared, still indignant.

"I am sure you do."

"How do you know?"

"Because it is about Cripple."

"What of her?" showing a wee bit of eagerness.

"Her brindled pie pup wants an owner."

"Oh, John!" lifting a pair of sparkling, lovely obs to his tanned face, and scrutinising it closely. "Do you mean that I am to have that little, dear dog?"

"Certainly, if you wish to," he rejoined, promptly.

"And when may I have it?"

This question was asked with lips that trembled like a child's over a new toy.

"To-morrow, if you will come and fetch it."

"Oh! may I?"

"Of course you may. Only you must promise to stay and let Judith give you a cup of tea and a piece of her famous griddle cake."

"Of course I will," she assented, joyfully.

"And then I will see you and the pup safely back to the Rectory and your father's care."

"That promises to be a nice arrangement," she declared, naively.

"I am glad you think so," he rejoined, with more earnestness, perhaps, than the occasion seemed to warrant.

"I hope it may turn out a fine day."

"I think it will," with a glance at the sky flooded with rosy light. "And now good-bye," he added, with evident reluctance. "I must be getting home."

"Good-bye," she said, a little absently, as she gave him her hand, her mind evidently full of the brindled pie pup. "Give my love to Judith."

"I will, thanks. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

And then he turned away, whistled his dog, and strode off through the mouldering old tombstones to a gate on the opposite side, out on to the road leading to his home.

The sunset had faded, night, like a weird and beautiful shadow, hung over the earth. The evening star trembled on the hem of a vast purple cloud, while the lesser lights of the firmament came out, one by one, and mounted on their golden thrones, while finally the moon sailed up in all her silver glory, lighting up the gloom.

Still the girl leant on the wicket-gate, her eyes wandering idly over the mounds, underneath which lay resting the darlings of many of the villagers, her father's parishioners, on the crumbling, moss-covered headstones, and the old church, with its hoary, venerable front, that seemed to need renovation so sadly, though perhaps that would have done away with its old-world charm and quaint aspect, in keeping with which were the four weather-beaten gravestones, in different stages of dilapidation, that flanked the pathway leading to the principal entrance, and which varied from almost illegible and broken old age down to comparative newness.

These were the graves of four generations, from great grandfather to great grandson, setting forth how James John Joseph Delbrook, yeoman, had died in 1723, leaving issue one son, Joseph James Delbrook, who in his time died fifty summers later, well stricken in years, leaving also issue two sons, one of whom, John Joseph, died in 1810, leaving a daughter and a male child, who bore the whole of his great grandfathers' biblical names for the best part of a century, and died quietly in the year 1876, aged ninety.

John Delbrook and Judith, his sister, fifteen years his senior, were the last survivors of this sturdy race of yeomen, pure and simple.

John had marched with the times a little, and was more of a "gentleman farmer," more polished, less bigoted and honestly narrow-minded than his simple ancestors had been.

He spoke a little French, a little German; knew how to dance, play tennis, and slog White Melville's hunting-song, and had actually been on the Continent, a thing his progenitors had never even thought of.

Added to which he was a true gentleman and an honest-hearted, generous fellow to boot, as anyone about Caple would willingly testify; a good shot, a fair car, a graceful rider, and no mean proficient at billiards and chess.

Such was the man who loved Poppy Caulfield, with all the strength and tenderness of his nature, the rector of Caple-le-Bretel's sole and only child, and one dearly-prized earthly treasure.

Poppy did not know she was beloved by stalwart John Delbrook.

The idea would have amused her, for she was eighteen, he thirty-seven, and the difference was very great in her young eyes.

Besides, she had known John ever so long—since she could remember anything.

Her earliest recollections were full of him. He played a prominent part in her somewhat monotonous and uneventful, yet happy, life, as did Judith, his sister, and she would have been almost as much surprised to hear her declare herself as a lover as she would be if John did so; and, in truth, she had given little thought to love or lovers.

Mr. Caulfield brought her up not to do so in a simple, honest fashion; and she was more childish than many town maidens of fourteen.

That Delbrook loved her was no wonder, for she was just the sweetest, prettiest thing in or about Caple, and not her least charm lay in the fact that she was quite unconscious of this.

She was unspoiled, unspotted by the world, that great, weary, tumultuous, fashionable, frivolous world that lay beyond the limits of the remote country village in which she had spent all the days of her life.

All her thoughts were innocent, all her ideas unformed.

The birds, the flowers, the bees, the butterflies, her old dog Lassie—they were her companions and intimates; she had few others, save John and Judith.

Judith was plain, dark, prim, sour of face, sweet of disposition.

She knew matrimony and the joys of motherhood would never fall to her lot, but she hoped to share some of those rare pleasures through her brother; and nothing would have given her greater or more unfeigned pleasure than to yield up her keys and her position as mistress of Brook Farm to pretty Poppy Caulfield, and see her installed, where she long had ruled, in undisputed power.

To hear the ring of childish voices and the patter of tiny feet trotting over the old tiled floor would give her unqualified delight, and she longed eagerly for her brother to woo and win the fair girl she knew he loved, and wondered that he tarried so long in his courtship, not knowing that he loved so dearly he feared to lose even the pleasant friendship that existed between them if he were too precipitate, and declared his passion before Poppy was old enough to understand or ready to reciprocate.

She was young for her years, childish in the extreme, and he did not care to disturb her dreaming serenity, to banish the childlike innocence that was her greatest charm, and so he waited and waited, and watched her as she stood—

"With reluctant feet  
Where the brook and river meet,  
Womanhood and childhood sweet,"

and hoped for an opportunity to tell her the old, old story.

## CHAPTER II.

THE sun was shining gaily the next day as Poppy set out on her way to Brook Farm, accompanied by Lassie.

All was full of life, and glow, and beauty. She wooed the young green leaves with amorous touch, and stirred the springing grasses, enamelled with daisy and buttercup.

A thrush sang blithely in a giant lilac bush, trying to out-warble a lark, who, soaring up, up into the blue ether, sent forth a thrill of music sweeter than anything else could be.

The clear note of the cuckoo rang out from a belt of pines; pink may crowning the hedges nodded in the gentle breeze; the chestnuts bore their load of white bloom, the laburnums their gay yellow livery, and the fields here and there were brilliant with the gorse and furze blossoms of the same rich colour.

Everything was fair, and fresh, and pleasant to the eye.

Not least so the old farm-house itself, with its many-paned windows, mangle architecture of black lath and white plaster, and sloping roof, entirely covered with a green plant, that crept, and turned, and twisted itself everywhere.

Round the chimney-stacks framing the windows, concoaling the rain-pipes and giving an indescribably quaint and rural look to the ancient building, so charmingly surrounded, backed by downs, a wood at one side, a river on the other, and a glimpse of the distant blue ocean in front, so beautifully kept; its smooth lawns, with their trim edges green as emeralds; its cool winding shrubberies, the splendid old oaks and elms, the silver-stemmed birches, the stately poplars, the lovely limes, the sparkling flower-beds, that literally seemed to glow and glint in the sunrays; the be-jewelled borders, gemmed with Nature's fairest jewels; the glistening laurels, the graceful shamacha, the trimly-clipt yew-hedge surround-



ing the demesne; the neat, tidy outbuildings—all formed a picture worthy of a second glance, and one that Poppy loved to gaze on.

"Isn't it pretty, Lassie, isn't it pretty?" she murmured, as usual, when she first caught sight of the coming on it suddenly from a sharp curve in the road; and, as usual, the old dog looked up at her, and wagged her tail, as though assenting cordially.

It was not much wonder if these two thought it pretty, for the Rectory house, their home, adjoined the churchyard, and though picturesque and not without a certain beauty, was not a very cheerful spot by reason of a certain amount of dilapidation about the old church, a certain length and rankness about the grass, that flourished and grew anywhere and everywhere—on the tombstones, paths where it was not wanted as well as where it was, and also because it is not exactly cheering to always have in sight as you take your morning cup of tea, or your midday glass of wine, or your evening cut out of a prime joint the stones that record the death of others, and show plainly the uselessness and littleness of life, which must end in a bed in a few feet of earth, and—oblivion.

"Lovely old doggie! Won't it say 'Yes'?" and obediently the collie barked a "Yes" to her mistress's query.

"Glad you like it," said a voice behind her, and, turning quickly, she found herself face to face with the master of all she was engorging so warmly.

"John! Where have you sprung from?" she demanded.

"Not from anywhere."

"You must have."

"No. I have walked, not sprung, from the home-meadow. I saw your gown," touching the poppy-coloured skirts, "in the distance, and it was like a red rag to a bull; it attracted me. I ran for it."

"Now, I am sure that is a fib!" observed Miss Caulfield, gravely.

"Why?"

"Because you don't look in the least as though you had run!"

"Don't I?"

"No, and you know you don't. Neither does Noble," with a glance at the setter, whose flanks did not heave, and whose tongue was not lolling out, as it might reasonably be expected to do after a sharp scamper up from the home-meadow.

"Well, supposing I did exaggerate a little, what then?" asked John Delbrook, his eyes lingering fondly on the girl's winsome face.

"What!" she exclaimed, with an assumption of anger; "why I think it is very wicked to perjure, and I shall tell father that one of his parishioners is in a bad way, and likely to be lost, utterly and entirely, by reason of his fibbing and exaggerating propensities."

"Oh, don't!" cried the culprit, "or we shall have a sermon about it next Sunday. The rector is always glad to get hold of, and verbally flagellate, any unlucky sinner whose shortcomings he hears of."

"And quite right too," declared Miss Poppy, stoutly. "Where would be the use of his being a clergyman unless he discovered and reproved the sins of others?"

"Why none, of course, little wisacre," laughed her companion; "only let me off. Promises?"

"What will you give me if I do?" she asked, naively as any child of six or eight years would do.

"Anything you like," returned the young farmer, eagerly. "A smart collar for Cripple's son."

"And a lead to match!" she demanded, with sparkling eyes and lovely, quivering lips.

"And certainly a lead," he acquiesced.

"Then I will let you off."

"Good child, to be merciful."

"I am not a child," with a little indignant gesture.

"Good young woman, then."

"That is better."

"I am glad you are satisfied at last."

"So I am," she assured him, seriously.

"Very well. Now we will go in and see if

Judith has made that cake for us, and has tea ready," and together they walked slowly over the trim lawns, chatting gaily as they went.

"When do you cut the hay?" asked Poppy, as they stopped for a moment in the porch, and her eyes wandered over the lush meadows away to the right.

"In a week or two," he answered, "if this hot sun goes on."

"Of course you mean to invite me!" she said, with pretty imperiousness.

"Of course," he agreed, looking at her with an expression in his eyes that she did not understand. "Do you think any junketing or merry-making here would be deemed complete without your presence?"

"No, I do not," she returned, candidly. "I always feel as if I were one of the family."

"I only wish you were," he muttered, as he followed her into the quaint, low-ceiled, oak-beamed parlour, where Judith sat hemming dusters, and sending alternate glances at the well-laden tea-table and at the white bull terrier who sat in a basket with her family of three fat, butter-like pups, playing with them, and eyeing the great, white Persian cat that lay at Miss Delbrook's feet with a look not altogether friendly.

"So you've come, my dear, at last!" said the elder lady, rising and embracing the younger one warmly.

"Yes, but am I late. Did you expect me sooner?"

"John did not say what time you would come, but I hoped it would be soon after dinner. You know I am always glad to have you with me, child!"

"Thanks, Judith; I know you are. I had to do some writing for father, or should have been here sooner."

"Oh, there it is! You dear!" and with a little scream of delight she sank on her knees and began fondling the pups.

"Were you addressing me?" asked John, gravely.

"No, sir, I was not," she retorted, disdaintfully, with a toss of the soft brown locks, and an added colour in the rounded cheeks.

"Oh, I beg your pardon. I thought you were."

"You have no business to think in such a matter," she declared, arbitrarily.

"Haven't I? Well I won't do so again," he promised, with due and becoming humility.

"That is right. Now which of these little loves is mine?"

"They are all my property at present," he said, coolly.

"Now, John, don't be absurd," she commanded.

"I couldn't be if I tried ever so hard."

"Pooh. You are now."

"Take care, madam," he cried, warningly, "the pup may not change owners if you moult and flout me."

"Do tell me!" rising and slipping a little hand through his arm, and raising an entreating pair of eyes to his.

"This one," he answered, giving in at once weakly, under the enemy's irresistible artillery, and picking up a round white ball, with legs and head and tail, covered with black and yellow patches, and putting it into her arms.

"Oh, you darling!" and she set to kissing the "darling" in a way that made honest John wish for the first time in his life that he was a brindled-plaid bull terrier pup.

"That little object does not appreciate your caresses."

"Oh, yes it does," as the little animal licked her hand, and the mother, fearful for the welfare of her podgy off-spring, deserted her other two children, and leaving the basket came over and begged before Poppy in a most comical fashion. "May I take it home to-night?"

"Well, I hardly think so," he answered, seeing his way to getting her often to the farm during the next two or three weeks. "You had better leave it here with the mother a little while longer."

"Oh, must I?" with such a disappointed

"It will be better, and you can come and see it every day if you like," he added, diplomatically.

"May I?" giving the fat lump an extra hug.

"Of course."

"Then I shall certainly do so."

"I hope you will," significantly.

"And now come to tea, it is ready," announced Judith, and putting the little dog back in the basket, to the great joy of its mother, who tumbled in after it in no end of a hurry, and began industriously to lick it all over.

Poppy went and seated herself in the chair placed at John's right hand, and prepared to enjoy the dainties provided for her.

It was a pleasant meal, in the old, quaint room; and the memory of it would come back to honest John long after—when his heart was torn and wounded by pain and grief and his life joyless. In his mind's eye he would see the dainty little lady sitting in the great carved chair, her brilliant skirts spread out, her brown locks resting against the Saitr's head carved on the back, her cheeks delicately flushed, her soft eyes full of content and peace. Again he would smell the perfume of the flowers peeping through the open window, and the sweet scent of the rose-leaves and blooms Judith dried and stored in the great china vases that flanked either side of the wide fireplace. Again he would hear the clear ring of those silvery tones, listen eagerly for the next word and feel foolishly, unreasonably happy when she laid a tiny hand on his arm to emphasise some speech or childish piece of impertinence, while the china shepherd and shepherdesses decorating the high mantelpiece seemed to smirgle and ogle them, and approve thoroughly of things in general. Again he seemed to hear her singing "Douglas, Douglas, tender and true," accompanying herself on the antique piano which was neither tuneless nor soft, yet which could not kill or drown the melody and sweetness of the fresh young voice, while the scarlet skirts fluttered in the gentle breeze that blew in through the long window open to the ground, and the soft locks were stirred by it, and the round cheeks tinged by a deeper rose tint.

How lovely she was, how childlike, how innocent! Oh, if he could only win her—win her for his very own—his wife!

The thought dwelt in his mind on the homeward walk through the quiet country lanes, flooded with the silvery moonlight, till they were transformed and beautified into fairy-like places.

Could he, should he, dare now to ask her to be his bride? Was it too soon? Would he startle her dreaming innocence, scare away the bird he wished to cage? How could he tell? Women at best were "kittle cattle—uncertain, coy, hard to please."

He loved so well, he feared his fate too much, and while he hesitated in fatal indecision—for is not the man, or woman, too, for the matter of that, who hesitates, lost!—the walk came to an end, and his chance, too, and they were at the Rectory door, and Poppy was holding out her hand, and wishing him adieu.

"Good-night!" he said, tenderly, taking them in his, and looking down at her, with a world of true affection in his honest eyes. "I have enjoyed this walk so much."

"So have I," she returned, candidly, and too carefully to quite please an ardent and would-be lover. "The country looks lovely by moonlight!"

"Yes. You can have an opportunity of seeing it again soon. The pup will expect to see you soon again."

"Of course; I shall come very often, perhaps to-morrow."

"Do; we shall expect you," and he turned and retraced his steps, feeling quite light-hearted at the prospect of seeing her again so soon.

### CHAPTER III.

POPPY CAULFIELD, however, did not go on the morrow to Brook's Farm. Things occurred which diverted her thoughts into another channel, and

for a while she forgot the bridled pup and the pup's owner, and thought only of the new interest that came into her life, and broke the dull monotony of it.

That night when Bridget, the old nurse, butler, cook, and general factotum, opened the door to her she gave her the astonishing piece of news that—

"Master had a guest with him in the study—a strange gentleman."

Without a moment's consideration or hesitation Poppy walked across the hall to the study-door, turned the handle and entered, unannounced and unexpected.

By the rather dim light of a pair of composite candles, flaring and flickering in the sudden breeze caused by the opening of the door, she saw her father reclining in the old leather arm-chair, his favourite seat when writing the mild, milk-and-water sermons with which he weekly favoured the rustics of Caple-de-Bretel, a hand resting on either arm, while his eyes were turned full on a man who sat opposite him, a man the like of whom Poppy had never seen in the course of her young life.

He was tall and fair, with a long blonde moustache that shaded his shapely mouth like the sweep of a bird's wing, wavy golden hair, deep blue eyes, straight features, and a lithe, graceful figure, added to which he was elegantly dressed, his clothes evidently the production of a first-rate Bond-street tailor, though Poppy did not know that; and his air was distinguished and totally different from the men she was accustomed to see, who slouched somewhat, wore thick boots and gaiters, and coats of rough tweed, with innumerable pockets, that bulged here and bagged there, in anything save an elegant fashion, and gave them a coarse, underbred, unpolished appearance, that would inevitably make them contrast unfavourably with this elegant stranger.

"Ah! Poppy!" said her father, on seeing her.

"Come back, my dear!"

"Yes, father," she returned, dropping her eyes beneath the steady and hardly polite gaze which she encountered from the Rector's guest.

"Levison, this is my daughter, my only child. Poppy, you have heard me speak of my old friend, Colonel Levison!"

"Yes, father," she said, again looking straight at him.

"This is his son, Captain Levison, my most welcome guest."

Poor old man! he would not have made this speech quite so warmly could he have lifted the veil that hides the future from the eager gaze of weak mortals, and have seen what sorrow this man was to bring to the one he loved best in the whole world.

"Charmed to make your daughter's acquaintance!" declared the Captain, with a slight drawl, rising and holding out a hand, slender and white as any woman's, into which the girl put her trembling one, murmuring something quite unintelligible to Levison, who was scanning her face with a look of awakened interest on his *blest* one.

"Did John see you home?" queried the Rector.

"Yes, father."

Somehow she didn't seem able to get out anything else distinctly; she was so bewildered and overcome, though it was quite foreign to her nature to be so.

"And how is Miss Judith?"

"Quite well. She sent—her remembrances to you," stammering a little over this long speech.

"Ah, yes, I must really call there—really call there; but I have so much to do, so little leisure," which was a fact, seeing that he was always poring over musty tomes and black-letter works old as the hills, an occupation that hardly left him time to scribble the weak, disjointed lecture he called a sermon.

"Near neighbours?" inquired Levison, removing his eyes from the daughter's face, and turning them on the father's by way of a change, though he hardly thought the change an advantage to himself.

"Yes, Brook's Farm, only a mile off," explained the old man. "Delbrooks have lived there hun-

dreds of years, and John, the last male survivor of the race, is a fine fellow—a fine, honest, noble fellow!"

"A rustic paragon!" sneered the Captain, taking an instant and unaccountable dislike to this unknown country farmer, whose praises were so loudly sung by his host.

"Quite so," agreed Caulfield, not understanding why the other was bitter, and being quite above the littleness and vanity to which the younger man was a prey.

"Great friends of yours, of course, Miss Caulfield?" he asked, addressing her for the first time, an honour which made her blush and tingle to the end of her very finger tips.

"Yes," she murmured.

"You must introduce me, if you will," he went on, pleased and flattered at the impression he saw he had made on the unsophisticated girl.

"I am going to stay with your father for awhile, he having kindly invited me until my friend, Lord Kent's, shooting-box is made habitable for my occupation, and I should much like to know all your friends (which was an unmitigated cram), and join in all your pursuits (which he would doubtless find highly interesting), see all your pets, and become thoroughly conversant with the pleasures of a rural life."

"I shall be very pleased to do my best to amuse you," she said, with a great effort to speak steadily, and subdue her bashfulness, "while you stay with us."

"Thanks; most kind of you," and, to her intense astonishment and amazement, he took her hand and shook it cordially, just because he liked to feel the soft, warm fingers lying in his.

A month passed, such a month as Poppy had never spent before. In those four short weeks she had learnt what it was to be happy, to—live.

The gay *debonair* soldier seemed to have brought new life into the quiet old Rectory and great, if fleeting, happiness to one of its inmates.

Long ago Lord Kent's shooting-box, lying some four miles further down on the London-road, had been ready for his occupation, but from day to day he put off going, and remained with Caulfield, who was only too glad to have him as guest in his tumble-down old house.

It was Gay's custom to stroll out daily with Poppy, who had overcome her awe and shyness of him, and become quite accustomed to his elegance and magnificence, won over by his courteous, polished manners and thinly veiled admiration, and these strolls had become a necessity to her.

She would wait of a morning with flushed cheeks and shining eyes till it suited him to come to her pretty little morning-room, and declare himself ready to accompany her to feed the chicks and the ducklings, take a look at the cows and the sturdy pony that drew the little yellow market-cart, of which she had been so proud until Guy Levison spoke of the victoria his friends drove through Hyde Park in, and the phaetons and drags the men of his regiment and he himself used.

Then she began to feel somewhat discontented with the homely vehicle, and ashamed to ask the Captain to drive in it.

People wagged their heads when they saw Poppy walking and driving about with this fascinating son of Mars, and thought it was not wise of old Caulfield to leave her so much alone with him, a pity that the Rector did not open his sleepy eyes a bit, and see what manner of man this was to whom he so confidently trusted his young daughter—what a worthless dog, what a harmful flirt and scamp!

But Caulfield would not see any harm in the son of his boyhood's friend; and, in truth, Guy meant none, at least so he told himself when his not particularly active conscience gave him a wee bit of a prick.

All the women he had met—and, be it known, flirted with—were on the look-out for husbands, and well able to take care of themselves, well able to take at their right and light value the soft nothings he breathed in their willing ears.

With Poppy it was entirely different. She was thoroughly unartificial, entirely unsophisticated and innocent. She stood no chance against the Rector's fascinations, while her undisguised

admiration of him was rather more than pleasing to his vanity.

He was not growing younger nor handsomer. Keen women of the world would have noticed that the golden hair was getting thin at top, and was carefully brushed and arranged so as to hide any deficiencies; that lines were beginning to appear round his mouth and crow's feet about the blue eyes, while hard living and regimental dissipation were beginning to tell in the haggard appearance his face often wore.

Poppy, however, did not criticise her Adonis too closely. To her he was all that was charming, gallant, and handsome.

She saw none of the defects that less blinded eyes—for love is proverbially blind—would instantly have detected, and was intensely happy all through those long, hot summer days when Guy Levison strolled with her through the woods, where the violets grew in profusion and the dog-roses were beginning to bud, and talked of friendship, and avoided the word "love" sedulously, as though afraid of it.

As, perhaps, he was, for his young companion was fair and sweet enough to make any man forget to be cautious and keep an eye to the main chance, to make him oblivious of debts, and duns, and other nasty things that have to be remembered if a man wishes to keep his head well above water, make things as comfortable as he can for himself, and not act like a donkey.

Only he found it rather hard not to make an ass of himself as he strolled over the springy emerald turf, holding the tiny soft hand in his, and looking into the lovely brown eyes, and began seriously to think of an excuse to get away, as this milk-and-water billing and cooing might land him Heaven only knew where.

It was not an altogether pleasant thing for John Delbrook to come suddenly one day in the woods on the girl he loved and wanted to make his wife strolling hand-in-hand with this fascinating soldier, whose advent had given him cause enough for the heartache, and taken much of the brightness out of his life.

He felt unreasonably angry, because he was shy and awkward at the sudden meeting, while Levison, on the contrary, was cool and calm to a degree, and made some easy and natural remark about the weather, to which John could find nothing to reply, and strode on, looking sulky and angry, to his home.

"What is the matter, brother?" asked Judith, catching sight of his white face and knitted brows as he entered the parlour where she was sitting at work.

"I have just met Poppy in the woods hand-in-hand with that scamp Levison," he returned, in great perturbation of spirit. "What can the Rector be thinking of to allow it!"

"And what can Poppy be thinking of to do it!" demanded Miss Delbrook, astutely. "Why, you're worth a dozen of him, John!"

"She does not think so," he rejoined, shaking his head sadly. "She loves him and thinks him perfect."

"Poor young fool!" exclaimed Judith, with a sniff of annoyance and contempt. "The sooner her eyes are opened the better for her!"

Perhaps so; only having one's eyes opened to the shortcomings of those we care for is, generally speaking, a somewhat painful process; and Poppy found it so, for Guy meant to go on to the shooting-box for a week or two, and then back to the gay world which he had left for a while, and which he found he could not exist without, and he was casting about for a suitable excuse for leaving Caple as he strolled by her side.

"I wonder what you will be doing this time next week?" he said, at last, looking anywhere save at her.

"Do you! Why?" she asked, in some surprise, lifting her head and scanning the half-averted face.

"Because I shall be far away from here."

"Far away from here!" she repeated, blankly.

"Yes; a—business matter. First, you know; must see to it. Lawyer fellow won't wait any longer," he explained, desperately and somewhat incoherently, as he saw the look on her face, and knew full well that she had given him the best love of her young heart. "Will you be



sorry when I am gone! Will you miss me?" he asked, softly, and she answered "Yes" dreadingly enough.

"You know I must go," he went on, feeling he was a cad and a sneak, though he had never meant to act like one. "I have been extremely happy here, more so than I ever thought I could be."

"Then why give up that happiness?" she faltered, her soft cheeks white as the roses that clung and climbed over the Rectory porch.

"Because I must. Can't you see, don't you understand?" he went on, in greater desperation, feeling that it was, indeed, hard to wind up this little *affaire de coeur*. "I am desperately poor. I must go."

"I see," she said, stonily; "and I am poor, too."

"Poppy, you will think of me sometimes?"

His eyes looked into hers full of passion and pleading.

"I wish I could say that I would not," she answered, brokenly, and his conscience smote him as he met the stricken look she gave him as, wrenching her hands from his clasp, she fled away like a wild thing to hide her sorrow from all eyes.

#### CHAPTER IV.

THE following day Captain Levison left Caple, taking with him the sunshine out of Poppy's life, which seemed now dull and empty. She never knew how she got through the rest of that never-to-be-forgotten year. She held her head high, and bore her sorrow proudly, only the days seemed so long. She did not care for any of her old occupations, and it cost her a great deal to present a smiling countenance to her father and those friends who, scenting something wrong, came to spy and pry, as kind friends always do, when their dear intimates are in trouble.

Still, they did not gain much satisfaction, for she deceived all by her gaiety, all save honest John Delbrook, who noted the pathetic look in her soft eyes, the frequent tremor of the sweet lips, and hated Levison, in consequence, with a deadly hate, feeling that he would like to strangle him if only he could get a good grip of his throat.

The winter was long, severe, and trying, and the old Rector of Caple-le-Bretel sickened and drooped visibly, and when the chill March winds blew across the downs the doctors gave him up, and Poppy knew she must soon part with her only relation.

"Can nothing be done?" asked John, ready to do anything to try and save the girl he loved from pain and sorrow.

"Nothing," answered the swell London physician, brought down at enormous expense by Delbrook. "The machinery is worn out. Mr. Caulfield dies of old age," and with a pompous bow he passed out, leaving desolation behind him.

"John," murmured the old man, brokenly, as the other bent over him, "you—will—be good to—my child, and—guard her!"

"With my life," he answered, firmly.

"She will—be alone—and poor—a miserable fate, alas!"

"Do not let that disturb you. Her welfare shall be my chief care," John assured him. "Judith will make her welcome at the farm."

"Bless you, bless you!" muttered the dying man. "Could I have—lived to see—her the—wife—of such—an one as you—I should have died—happy."

"It will not be my fault if she is not my wife before the year is out," said the younger man, and the Rector pressed his hand feebly, and asked that his daughter might be brought in, and holding her hand and John's he drifted slowly away to the Great Beyond, and Poppy was alone in the world.

A few days later the funeral was over, and pale and weary in her heavily-creased dress the young girl sat in the drawing-room, making an auction lot of all the worldly goods and chattels she possessed, the tears falling fast and frequently, as she touched each well-known thing that seemed like a dumb friend.

Outside the rain was coming down in a steady, soaking fashion, and everything looked dull, and blurred, and dreary. The spring flowers were beaten into the ground, the grass was sodden, and the gravel paths were miniature rivulets.

She turned with a sigh from contemplating the dreary scene and went on with her work until Bridget, thrusting her ruffled gray head in at the door, inquired if she would see "Muster Delbrook," and being told "Yes," ushered him in.

"It is very good of you to come and see me," she said, holding out her hand, and trying to smile—a woful little travesty of a smile that made him feel a lump in his throat.

"It is good of you to see me so soon," he rejoined. "You know that I would not have intruded on you only I have something serious to say to you."

"Yes," the brown eyes looked questioningly into his.

"May I ask what your plans are?"

"I—I—have hardly formed—any—yet," she faltered.

"That is all right," he said, briskly.

"I must sell all these things, I suppose," indicating the tables and chairs by a gesture, "pay all the bills, and then try and get some employment in London."

"That course would hardly have pleased your father."

"Do you think not?" she queried, with trembling lips and varying colour.

"I am sure it would not."

"Why? How is it you can speak so confidently?"

"Because he honoured me with his confidence, and told me what his wishes concerning you were."

"Yes." She looked at him with inquiry in the pathetic brown eyes. "Will you tell me what he wished?"

"Certainly. I came here to do so. He wished you to come and live with Judith and me at the farm, for us to be your protectors; try and fill his place."

"Oh, Mr. Delbrook, I could not do that!" she exclaimed, a flush tingling her white cheeks.

"Why not?" he demanded, almost curtly, a keen look of disappointment on his bronzed face.

"I could not inflict myself on you. Think what a drag and encumbrance I should be!"

"How so?"

"I am penniless, I believe."

"Then your believe wrongly, Poppy. You have sixty pounds a-year, which would amply keep a child like you living with us; but even had you not a farthing you ought to know that old and tried friends as we are would gladly share our last crust with you."

"I am sure of it," she cried, warmly, "and I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

"And you will come and live with us?"

For a moment she hesitated, perceptibly.

"It was your father's dying wish that you should do so," he urged—his eyes, wistful as a dog's, fixed on her face.

"Then I will," she said, in a low tone, placing her hand in his, "if you will give me a home?"

"Most gladly!" he exclaimed, joyfully, pressing the little fingers tenderly. "How glad Judith will be to have you with her!"

"And how glad I shall be to be with her!" she said, softly; "by-and-by, when the sharpness of my grief has toned down somewhat."

And so it was settled, and Poppy made her home at the old farm-house, and tried to be happy, only somehow or other she couldn't be so, quite.

A cloud hung over her, a remembrance of those past, happy summer days, and the blue-eyed Adonis who had taught her what love was. True, this gay Lothario had acted very badly; true, he had not even sent her one line of condolence on her father's death—the captain did not like tears and funerals and that kind of thing, and took care to keep out of the way of them—one word of sympathy for her lonely state, and yet, womanlike, she cherished tender memories of the absent

scamp, and was blind to John Delbrook's untiring devotion and deepfelt love.

So the summer wore away and autumn came slowly, lingeringly along, leaving the print of her burning fingers on bush, and tree, and field.

The corn was reaped, the smoke of the dencher-pot was seen in the fields, the harvest was garnered. John had more leisure, and began to think of trying to win Poppy's heart.

"Is it too soon?" he asked his astute sister.

"No," she answered, promptly. "Ask her at once, and press her for a favourable answer."

"I will," he said, firmly, striding out to the garden where his love sat under a copper beech, reading Tennyson's "Idylls," Lassie, Noble, and Cripple, in a group at her feet.

"Come for a walk, Poppy?" he asked.

"Gladly!" she answered, rising with alacrity, and tying on her broad-brimmed shady hat. "I have grown quite tired of sitting here."

"I hope you will never get tired of us," he said, glancing at her apprehensively.

"I am ~~not~~ likely to do that," she responded, looking at him gratefully. "I shall never forget your kindness and Judith's."

"Don't talk of it," he urged, hastily. "If you only knew the pleasure it is to us to have you here you would understand that it is we who are your debtors."

"Oh, John!"

There was a new tone in his voice, a warm light in his eyes, that made her blush and feel conscious that something was coming.

"Are you happy here, child?" he demanded, earnestly, drawing her hand through his arm, as they reached the shelter of the dense wood, which hid them from prying eyes.

"Very," she answered, truthfully. "Happier than I ever hoped to be again. You are so kind."

"Life here contents you?"

"Yes, I am quite content now," with a little impatient sigh that almost belied the words.

"You are certain?" he went on, watching her anxiously.

"Yes. Do I look discontented?"

"No, thank Heaven, you do not."

"Why are you so pleased?" looking at him wonderingly.

"Because I want you to stay here always."

"Stay here always!" she repeated, amazedly.

"Yes, Poppy, darling, I ask you to stay here with me. Will you be my wife?"

For some minutes there was silence.

"Speak to me!" he pleaded, touching her hand, and at his touch she raised her head, but between his honest visage and her eyes rose that other face, passion worn and fascinating, that had been too dear to her, and kept her silent. "Have you no word for me?" he asked, in an agony of suspense. "I love you so dearly—in so dearly! Life will be a blank without you."

"I am—not worthy so much affection," she faltered, blushing crimson.

"Not worthy; you are more than worthy! You are a queen among women. I am not half good enough for you; a country farmer, rough, unpollished, but all my heart, all my affection, is yours. Try to care a little for me, dear!"

"If I thought—I could make you happy," she began—

"You can, you can," he assured her, eagerly; "you, and you only. If you refuse me my life will be desolate. I shall never give another woman the opportunity of refusing me—of declining to be my wife."

"Don't say that!" she implored, nervously twisting her fingers in and out.

"I must; it is the truth. Poppy, will you not try to love me—try to make me happy?"

And she, looking up in his honest face, murmured "Yes," and was clasped to his heart almost before the word had left her lips, and kisses, warm and tender, showered on brow and cheek.

"Well?" asked Judith, as some two hours later her brother appeared in the parlour alone.

"Yes, it is well," he said, joyfully.

"She has accepted you?"

"Yes. She has promised to be my own—my very own."

"I am glad," and Miss Delbrook gave vent to a sigh of intense delight and relief.

"And I, Judith, am more than glad. I thank Heaven for my great good fortune with all my heart, and soul, and strength."

"I hope you will be happy," sighed his sister, this time in a different key and style, "and I hope she may prove worthy of the love you bear her."

"She will do so, I am sure," he answered, confidently.

"You think she has forgotten?" questioned Miss Delbrook, with some little reluctance.

"I think so," returned her brother, while for a moment his face grew deathly white.

"Then all will be well."

## CHAPTER V.

AND all was well for some time.

Poppy was gentle, kind, affectionate, if not absolutely loving; and a more exacting lover than John would have been content, and he was anything save exacting.

Devoted himself to the last degree, he expected little in return, and was grateful for such small mercies as an occasional pressure of the hand, a grateful glance, a kiss given of her own free will, or a flower placed in his buttonhole, and was wildly, if secretly and silently, delighted at these signs of affection in the girl he so ardently loved.

He was busy. There was much to be done before the winter came and his wedding-day, and while he was busy in field and meadow, his old rival came with the woodcock and snipe, and took up his quarters at Lord Kent's shooting-box, and began to look around, and hunt up the little brown-eyed maiden who had made such an impression on him the year before.

He had not far to look, or long to hunt. He made a few inquiries, discovered where she was, and threw himself in her way. She was startled at suddenly seeing her hero again; he was cool and self-possessed.

"Poppy, have you forgotten me?" he asked, in soft tones, taking her hand in both his.

"Forgotten you?" she faltered, blushing and shrinking away from him a little. "Oh, no; I could never do that."

"I am glad to hear it," he returned, taking the naive confession as a favourable sign, "as I have remembered you all these dreary months that we have been apart, and often thought of those pleasant days spent at the Rectory."

"Then why did you never write to me?" she asked, with just a touch of doubt in her mind to prompt the speech.

"I did not know I might," he returned, diplomatically. "Did not know you would care to hear from me. Would you have done so, Poppy?"

How soft his voice was, how caressing his manner, how handsome his face! What wonder was it that she forgot everything in the delight of the moment, and murmured—

"Yes; so much!"

"And I never knew this," he went on, with hypocritical regret, a pained look in the blue eyes that set her foolish little heart a pit-patting at a terrible rate, and made her tremble. "What I have missed!" he muttered, loud enough for her to hear. "But we won't think of those past sad months of separation; we will make the best of the present," he said, brightly, and then he managed to induce her to go for a stroll with him through the woods they had paced together so many times the year before, and then he would not let her go until she had promised to meet him there the next day.

She could not resist his fascinations—they were too powerful; and forgetting the allegiance she owed to John Delbrook she gave the promise, and after that they met daily, going over the old ground, visiting the old spots, and she each hour falling deeper and deeper in love with the worthless scamp, who had no notion of marrying her—only meant to amuse himself at her expense.

Nevertheless, being a dog in the manger, of a

horribly jealous disposition, he determined to make her break off her engagement with Delbrook, and set to work one afternoon, determining that, before she left him, she should give him her promise to do so.

It was a splendid October afternoon, fresh and bright; still the steady sunshine made it almost balmy as summer, and the setter and collie, as they dashed among the fading bracken after rabbit or hare, panted lustily, and seemed to find pursuing their quarry warm work.

The rooks in the tree-tops cawed loudly, a lark sang up beyond the clouds, a few late butterflies swept by, or poised for a while on the Michaelmas daisies, while here and there a solitary bee was seen, or a wasp, in its yellow and black jacket, somewhat lazy and lethargic, perhaps, just ready to sting to the death, and all the while the sunrays flooded the fine old trees in the wood with purest, softest light, gleaming and glancing through the purple and gold of the autumn leaves, where the nuts hung mellowing on the bough, and the blackberries grew in giant clusters on those bushes not hidden from the sun's ripening glow.

Guy's attentions and fascinations had turned her head. She hardly realized that she was plastic as wax in his skilful hands, and could refuse him nothing.

With downcast eyes and burning cheeks she listened to his specious words, his impassioned pleading, which yet never touched on marriage, or alluded to her becoming his wife, and it seemed somehow to be an easy thing to give up poor John, who, as the Captain glibly explained, was far too old and commonplace to aspire to be her husband; and, indeed, now she came to think of it, marrying John did seem a dreadfully dreary fate for her—so unromantic, so prosaic, and dull-coloured.

She forgot all his unthrift devotion, all his great love. The golden-haired hero at her side had cast his spell over her, and had taken the farmer's rightful place in her heart.

"And you will tell him to-night, without delay," urged Levison, "that you made a mistake—that you do not love him!"

"Yes," she agreed, with some reluctance.

"But—how shall I do it?"

"Be bold, darling!" he whispered, his lips close to her ear. "Think of me, of my wishes."

And so he left her, and she stood at the stile leading to the farm lost in thought, until a step behind her roused her from her reverie, which was not altogether pleasant.

"Are you waiting for me, pet?" asked a cheery voice, which she knew was her *hand's*.

"This is a pleasure. You have not been to meet me for an age, little woman."

"Oh, don't!" she cried, petulantly, as he put his arm round her, and drew her towards him.

"Don't, Poppy! Why, what is the matter?" he asked, anxiously.

"Nothing. It—it's—so—hot," she stammered.

"I thought you liked the warm weather!" he observed, setting her free.

"So I do. Only this is unseasonable."

"Do you feel feverish?" he queried, wondering at her flushed cheeks, and never guessing at the truth.

"Yes—no," she faltered, not daring to meet the eyes of the man she meant to wrong so cruelly. "I am not quite well."

"Come in, then, dear, and let Judith give you something."

"I don't want anything," she responded, irritably.

"Well, come in," he repeated, after a pause, full of pain to him. "Tea must be ready."

"I am coming. Only, John—"

"Yes," turning back, and looking at her with sad, wistful eyes.

"I—I—want to speak to you—to-night—can I? I have something to tell you."

"Of course you can, my dear," he answered, gravely, a sharp pain tugging at his heart-strings. "Come to me presently in my room," and he went on alone and entered the farm.

Later on in the evening he sat in his room waiting for her, a strange foreboding of coming ill on his mind.

He was not a man prone to notice things, still he would have been blind as a mole had he not seen that lately a great change had come over Poppy, and that she had become cold and constrained in his presence.

He could not help thinking how pretty she was, as she came into his room, in her soft white gown, that matched the colour of her cheeks, the bright hair tied back by a blue ribbon.

"John, I am so sorry!" she exclaimed, impulsively, stretching out her hands.

"Sorry, child; for what?" he asked, as he took them in his.

"I could not help it. I did try not to—to go on caring for you in the old way."

"Poppy, what do you mean?" he cried, sharply, a ring of anguish in his voice. "Have you deceived me?"

"I could not help it," she repeated. "Don't hate me."

"I shall never do that," he said, tenderly, even in the midst of his pain; "but—I don't understand. Tell me."

"How can I?" she murmured, blushing crimson.

"You owe me an explanation," he said, more firmly, "if there is to be any change in the relations existing between us."

"Do forgive me! I could not help it, indeed!" she replied, with a burst of sobs.

"Don't cry, Poppy!" and his voice sounded strange and harsh even to himself. "You mustn't do that."

Then, after a pause, with an evident effort—

"Do you mean—that there is someone else?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"And—you—want—me to—release you?"

"Oh! John, I owe all to you since my father's death. Don't think badly of me!" she implored, tearfully. "Indeed I could not help it. I love him so!"

He winced at this, and turned deathly pale under all his healthy sun tan, and it seemed a long time before he could command his voice and speak.

"And this man—you—love" the word seemed almost to choke him—"is—"

"Captain Levison," she interrupted, a tender light shining in her soft eyes. "Say you don't care!" she begged a minute later, seeing his ashen face.

"Care!" he cried, bitterly. "I care so much that there seems nothing left for me to live for!"

"You will forget," she murmured.

"It is not easy to forget when one has loved as I loved!" he answered, brokenly.

"John, I shall never forgive myself," with another burst of choking sobs.

"There, do not cry," touching the brown locks lightly. "Tell me—this—this—man—has asked you to marry him, of course?"

"No, not yet," she answered, in low tones, a burning blush suffusing her face.

"And he has spoken to you of love?"

John Delbrook was dumbfounded.

Poppy was proud, he knew, but where was her pride when she would let a man declare his passion before he proposed making her his wife?

"Yes; I—I—care—for him, and he is so—different—from anyone—I know!" she faltered, covering her burning face with her hands, and feeling a first twinge of shame.

"He must be, to act as he has done," said John, sternly. "But, of course," he added, quickly, "if he is free he means to make you his wife. And now go, Poppy; go to Judith. I wish to be alone."

"You forgive me, John?" she pleaded, with downcast eyes and trembling lips.

"Yes, child, I forgive you," he answered, slowly and heavily.

"How good you are!" she whispered, taking his hand and kissing it, and the touch of those soft lips thrilled poor John from head to foot, even in that moment of supreme agony and mortification.

"There, child, go!" he said, faintly; and when she left him he sank on a seat, threw out his arms on the table and buried his face in them.

For a long while he remained there motionless,



a prey to conflicting emotions; then rising suddenly he took down a formidable-looking hunting-crop that hung over the mantelpiece, picked up his hat, and went out into the mist of the warm autumn night.

He shaped his course towards Lord Kent's shooting-box, arriving there somewhat late in the evening, but not too late to obtain an interview with the man he sought.

A stormy meeting took place between the man Poppy loved, and the man who loved her, in the seclusion of the smoking-room, which they had to themselves—Captain Levison's extremely unwelcome guest having been shown in there by his directions—a stormy interview which might have ended in such conduct as would have led to an open scandal, only one of the men was a bit of a coward and other man was stern and determined, and the coward gave way before the other's just wrath and indignation, and promised to do all that he demanded.

And when Delbrook went away satisfied, and yet most dissatisfied, and flung himself face downwards in the dewy aftermath of the home-meadow, to wrestle silently with his misery, the Captain rang for soda and brandy, and soaced himself by cursing everything and everybody that came in his way.

## CHAPTER VI.

NOTWITHSTANDING the Captain's oaths and general rage with himself and everybody else, he duly presented himself at the farm next morning, and asked for Miss Caulfield.

"A friend of yours has come to see you, Poppy!" said John, with an effort.

"A friend!" she repeated, inquiringly, lifting a white, woe-begone face to his.

"Yes—Captain Levison. Go and make him happy," and he pushed her gently out of the room.

Nothing loth, and trembling with delight, Poppy went to the drawing-room, and received a somewhat chill salute from the gallant Captain, who was in no end of a temper, and sulky to the last degree.

After a while he asked her in plain, unvarnished terms to be his wife, and she delightedly accepted him, seeing none of the shortcomings of his cold wooing in her rapture and proud delight.

"She's dashed pretty!" he muttered to himself, as he sat with his arm languidly clasping the slender waist, "and stylishly dressed she'll rather more than pass muster; only how on earth am I to keep a wife, with all my debts and difficulties hanging about my neck! Heaven! what a fool I've been, regularly cornered and caught this time. However, I must try and make the best of it, if I can't see my way out of it," and he did.

He was fairly attentive as a lover, remaining through the winter at the shooting-box, and seeing a good deal of Poppy. This may have been the result of his fear of the hunting-crop which he knew Delbrook would use unsparringly if he caught him backsliding, but as the spring drew on he grew weary, and longed for the gaieties of town.

"Poppy, how would you like to go to London?" he asked her, one March morning.

"Oh, so much!" she answered, with eyes that fairly danced with glee at the mere thought of it.

"I am thinking of going there soon, on business," he added, for John's edification should he hear of this proposed trip; "and my sister will be glad to have you on a visit, if you care to come, too, and your guardian will let you."

"There is nothing on earth would give me greater pleasure!" she said, truthfully.

And so it was settled; and after a short time she found herself in Grosvenor-square, in the midst of a round of hollow gaieties, and among a set of giddy, heartless, over-dressed people, that did not at all suit her unconventional mind, and whom her decidedly unconventional manners alternately shocked and amused. Her gowns, too, were the subject of much jest and

merriment amongst the fast and fashionable set that thronged Mrs. Murray's rooms, though they were willing to admit—at least the male portion were—that she was very beautiful.

"Only so odd, so *gauche*, you know," murmured Mrs. Simmons, languidly, a fat, fair widow of forty, with a large fortune and a painted face, and a decided admiration for Gay Levison.

"Wears such tawdry, raggy-looking frocks," chimed in another artificial fair one.

"And does not know what to do with her hands and elbows, and is troubled about her feet," put in a third.

"Can't say five consecutive words, you know," declared a fourth, spitefully.

These flattering remarks, along with a heap more of the same sort, came to Levison's ears, and he grew more and more ashamed of his girl-betrothed, and less and less attentive.

Very sore grew the tender, loving heart, very sad the winsome face, as she began to fear that her lover was falling away from her. This fear became a certainty one night after a grand dinner at Mrs. Simmons's.

She had hidden in the window amidst the folds of the heavy curtains, and Levison and his hostess were quite unaware of her close proximity when they seated themselves on a *tête-à-tête* chair close by.

"I shall never be able to understand it," drawled the widow. "A man of your taste and perception, so fastidious, so particular, to choose a little informed thing like that!"

"Don't try to," he responded, with a nasty laugh that jarred horribly on the listener's ears. "Fellows make awful blunders sometimes."

"I see. You made one!"

"Rather."

"Ah! Tell me about it," with great interest, laying a jewelled hand caressingly on his coat sleeve.

"Well, you know, when I had sick leave, the year before last, I went to my father's old friend at Caple, and he, unfortunately, happened to have a daughter. You know there is nothing much to amuse a fellow of my sort in the country."

"Nothing, of course!" agreed the fat, fair, and forty lady.

"And the little girl seemed to fancy me; so we flirted a bit, then I left, and her father died, and when I went down last autumn I met her again, and seeing she was still sweet on me, like a fool I went a little too far; and her guardian, an awfully peppery sort of a fellow, made no end of a row about it, threatened to shoot me"—the Captain substituted "shoot" for "flog" as being more romantic—"wanted to fight; so, as I hardly thought the little girl worth fighting over"—poor Poppy winced here as though she had been struck a sharp blow—"I made the best of a bad bargain, and under pressure proposed, trusting to Providence to get me out of the scrape."

"And she hasn't helped you yet?" laughed the widow.

"No, but I am still hoping she will," and then they both laughed, and moved away, leaving Poppy feeling as though her heart had turned to stone, all her hopes lying shattered, her rosy visions dispelled.

But pride came to her aid.

She managed that night to hide her feelings, and the next day, making an excuse to Mrs. Murray and her treacherous lover, she returned to Brook's Farm, and two mornings later he received a few blurred, crooked lines that released him from his engagement, gave him the freedom he craved.

Neither Judith nor John could ever quite make out what had happened.

When pressed for an explanation she simply said she had discovered that she was not suited to Captain Levison, that they would never have been happy together, and therefore she had released him.

(Continued on page 320.)

## A PAIR OF IMPOSTORS.

—131—

IN the drawing room of one of the houses opposite Clapham Common sat Miss Dorothy Atkins Miller, the eldest of three sisters—who, having already appeared in society as "buds," were now in various stages of bloom and blossom.

Lillian, a tall, graceful girl of nineteen, stood by the open window, half hidden behind the lace draperies that swayed back and forth in the light breeze; while Grace, the youngest, bent over her embroidery, absorbed in the mystery of the latest Kensington designs.

The air was full of indefinable freshness and fragrance of early spring. A hand-organ, that had appeared as silently and almost as mysteriously as the crocus-buds beneath the window, was grinding out a wheezy welcome to the April sunshine. Little patches of green lay here and there on the common, like hopeful prophets, in the sun; the sparrows chirped noisily in the trees, and the faint, sweet odour of opening buds mingled with the heavy perfume of the hyacinths in the window.

"Lillian," said Dorothy, looking up from the paper which she had been reading, "I have found my mission!"

"Have you?" inquired Lillian, with languid interest. "And what may it be, pray?"

"Don't scoff, Lill dear," answered Dorothy "but listen." And glancing down the column of "Wants," she read the following item:—

"WANTED—An intelligent and comely young woman, capable of doing plain and fancy cooking. She will be received as one of the family, in a quiet country home.—Address, Mrs. Helen Henderson, The Beeches, Brenchley, Kent."

"There!" exclaimed Dorothy, waving her paper. "Am I not comely? Am I not intelligent? And can't I do plain and fancy cooking after a three month's course? The place was evidently made for me, and I for the place."

"But, Dolly," exclaimed Grace, "you are not really in earnest? You couldn't take a servant's position and expect to be received in society again."

"Nonsense!" replied Dorothy. "Society needn't know anything about it. Society will be politely informed that I am spending the summer with my aunt in the country. She is our aunt, you know. Don't you remember the winter she made mamma a visit, just before I came out, and how she reviled us, one and all? 'You girls' she said, 'can do nothing but attend literary institutes and French classes and dance waltzes!' Now I will show her that they can do all that, and something else besides. Mamma will give me a recommendation."

"Mamma will do nothing of the kind!" interposed Lillian, from the window. "She has engaged rooms at Scarborough from the first of June, and Miss Gussett is to begin on our dresses to-morrow."

Dorothy looked up with a bright smile.

"Lillian, you and mamma ought to be glad to have me off your hands, especially when I relinquish, once and for ever, all claim to those charming toilettes which Gussett is concocting in that wonderful brain of hers."

"You dear girl!" exclaimed Lillian, moved to enthusiasm by the generosity of this unexpected offer. "But what are you to gain from it all?"

"Success!" answered Dorothy, dramatically. And, seizing her sister by the waist, she waltzed gaily around the room to the strain of the un-tiring hand organ outside.

Just then, a caller was announced.

Dorothy glanced at the card.

"Mr. Clement Rich. Give him my excuses, please. I have an important letter to write—a business letter connected with my arrangements for the summer. Don't betray me, girls."

She hastily disappeared through one door just as the caller entered by another.

Mr. Clement Rich was a young man with a good figure and a prospective fortune. There was absolutely nothing to be said against him,

"THE HUMAN HAIR: Its Restoration and Preservation." A Practical Treatise on Baldness, Greyness, Superfluous Hair, &c. 40 pages. Post-free six stamps from Dr. HORN, Hair Specialist, Bournemouth.

and he was greatly admired by all discreet and sensible mammae.

If the lines of his mouth indicated irresolution and indecision, no one was the wiser; for his handsome blonde moustache was so well trained as to conceal the fact in a manner that was both clever and becoming; and, if the young ladies voted him dull, they must have been very exacting to expect nature to bestow all her good gifts on one person.

If Mr. Clement Rich was not intellectual, neither was he arrogant; if he was dull, he was good-tempered; and the annoyance which he experienced at being deprived of the pleasure of the eldest Miss Miller's society found no expression in the gentleness of his tone and manner.

He had fallen into the habit of depending on Miss Dorothy to guide the conversational frigate of an evening's call; and, at first, feeling somehow as if he had lost his bearings, he was puzzled how to proceed. But, if the conversation moved less briskly than was its wont, it was also less exacting; and, to a person of Mr. Rich's ability, it seemed quite as pleasant, now that he had tried it, to drift quietly with the tide of aimless talk, while he allowed all his energy to become absorbed in the contemplation of Lillian's fair face.

He had for a long time considered himself hopelessly in love with Miss Dorothy, but he missed her much less than he would have expected; and when, at parting, he told the young ladies that he had spent a most delightful evening, he did not feel that his immaculate conscience had been stained by even the shadow of an untruth.

Lillian went upstairs with a half smile on her lips, that made her look prettier than ever. As she looked into Dorothy's room to say good-night, she hesitated a moment, and then said abruptly,—

"Dolly, are you sure—quite sure—that you want to go to Brenchley?"

"Perfectly sure," answered Dorothy, with emphasis.

"Because," said Lillian, "I ought perhaps to tell you that Mr.—that a certain person—is to be at Scarborough this season; and, if you are not there, I am afraid—that something may happen."

Dorothy took her sister's delicate face between both her hands, looked into the blue eyes until the faint blushes came and went in the girl's cheeks, and said gaily,—

"Let it happen, dear—mamma will be very well pleased."

Lillian turned away, with a little shame-faced sigh of relief.

"I really am glad that Dolly doesn't care," she said to herself; "I have thought, sometimes that perhaps she might." And she went to sleep with rosy dreams floating before her eyes, satisfied that, in the end, everything would arrange itself quite to her satisfaction.

Early June found Mrs. Miller and her two younger daughters settled at Scarborough, where a brilliant season was predicted—and, in fact, already begun, according to the society column of the leading paper of the place.

"How much your poor papa would have enjoyed all this," observed Mrs. Miller, plausively, as they stood together on the beach. "He was so fond of the sea, although so absorbed in business, poor man, that he never had time to devote to needed recreation."

Mrs. Miller did not often indulge in sentimental or painful reflections, but it seemed proper that her daughters should be reminded occasionally of the fact that they had once a father, who, it is true, disappeared from their view so long ago that they were in some danger of forgetting him.

He had been a quiet man, of simple habits, and, having provided for his family an ample fortune, which seemed to be all that was expected of him, he had unobtrusively exchanged this world, with its ever changing tide of events, for the serenity of that changeless world which we have all been taught to consider a far better one.

Mrs. Miller would have considered herself deeply sinful if she had not been resigned—and no one ever ventured to assume that she was not; but certain events had transpired of late which

made her feel the loss of her excellent husband in a very real and practical way.

Many of her investments had proved unfortunate; and, unless a certain combination could be brought about, her confidential agent warned her that nothing less than financial ruin was to be expected.

However, there was no use pulling down the blinds before the house was sold, so she put the best possible face on the matter—arrayed her daughters rather more gorgeously than usual, was especially cordial to Mr. Clement Rich, and very properly thankful that Dorothy had taken a fancy to pass the summer where she would add neither to her cares nor her expenses.

Dorothy's letters were full of enthusiasm and delight over her new life.

"Aunt Helen has no idea who I am," she wrote. "Of course, I have changed in five years, and, when I introduced myself as 'Dolly Atkins,' the girl whom she had engaged to do plain fancy and cooking, there was not the slightest hint of recognition in her face."

"You can have no conception of the feeling of exhilaration it gives one to prove to oneself that one is capable of earning one's own living. Aunt Helen is more than kind, and treats me like a daughter rather than a servant. And the cooking is a great success. Everybody praises it, and everybody has a prodigious appetite."

"Aunt Helen—or Mrs. Henderson—has a Cousin Gerald staying here, a young man whom the whole household admires, down to the dog and the cat."

"He only came for a week, but he declares now that he shall stay all the summer, and has paid a premium to be taught farming by Mr. Henderson. I don't know whether it is the biscuits—of which he eats an enormous number—or something else which tempts him to prolong his sojourn."

"Of course, this being the head farm-hand, and my being the lady-help, throws us together a good deal; and although this country life is absolutely delightful, I am not sure but it might be a little dull at times if there were no one in the house beside Mr. and Mrs. Henderson."

"I didn't know that Helen had relatives by the name of 'Gerald,'" said Mrs. Miller, thoughtfully, as she read the letter. "They must be some of Mr. Henderson's family from Hampshire—obscure farmers, I suppose."

Meanwhile, the days and weeks were hurrying by.

June, with its singing birds and orchards smothered in apple-blossoms, had passed, and midsummer was at hand. The green world seemed in a languid dream, the birds were silent, and the long grass in the fields hardly stirred, so motionless was the air, save as it fell beneath the mower's scythe.

Dorothy sat at the back porch, watching the men at work in the fields, listening half unconsciously to the monotonous droning of the flies, and feeling as if, for the first time in her life, she were really happy.

The sunny outlook from the house, the surrounding hills, with their ever changing shadows, and the simple country life, with its freedom from restraint, were all inexpressibly delightful to her. There was one little cloud, and that no bigger than a man's hand, to mar her happy serenity.

Only the day before, "Cousin Gerald" had told her that he had about made up his mind to remain with Mr. Henderson for the rest of his life, and Dolly felt almost sure that it was not altogether on account of the biscuits.

"Of course," she said to herself, "if he knew who I was, he would not dare to think such thoughts." And then, in a more generous mood she said to herself: "He is far too much of a man to waste his life in a little country place like this. I will tell him so, and then go home."

But although Dolly was not wanting in courage, she did not immediately put her excellent resolves into execution. Sober second thoughts convinced her that she had been inexpressibly conceited and unmaidenly; that it might, yes—it might possibly be the biscuits, after all; so she remained, and July merged into August.

As Mrs. Henderson watched her Cousin Gerald and her pretty young handmaid sitting together

on the broad stone step of the lilac-shaded porch, talking, evening after evening, in the old, old fashion of youths and maidens, she thought of her own youth, and smiled, not disapprovingly.

One afternoon, early in September, Dolly went into the orchard for apples. They lay on the ground in lavish profusion, and it was altogether unnecessary for Cousin Gerald to leave his work and come to her assistance.

Because he chose to do so, however, Dolly chose to blush, and as she felt the warm colour mounting to her cheek in such an uncalled-for and exasperating manner, she became all at once convinced, by some inscrutable feminine logic, that the time had come for her to put an end to the innocent deceit which she had been practising for the last three months.

"Mr. Gerald," she said, as they turned toward the house, "I am going away to-morrow. Perhaps I shan't have any better opportunity to say good-bye."

"Going away?" he echoed. "Isn't this very sudden? Has anything happened? Are you dissatisfied?"

"Yes—no. What I mean is," said Dolly, suddenly embarrassed, "I didn't expect, when I came, to stay here always, and I think, perhaps, my mother will be glad to see me by this time."

"I have no doubt she will," said her companion, planting himself in front of a tree in such a way as most effectually to bar Dolly's progress. "I should think she might. You have never told me very much about your mother, by the way, or where you live. Perhaps you will be willing to do so now?"

"There is not much to tell," answered Dolly, demurely. "My mother is a widow, and there are three of us girls. But what I wanted to say, Mr. Gerald," she continued, with a sudden rush of words lest her courage might desert her, "if you will excuse me for saying it—and we have been such good friends I think you will—is that I can't help feeling as if you were doing yourself an injustice by staying here. Of course, it is very pleasant for a while; but, if I were your sister, I should tell you that you were throwing yourself away and wasting your abilities."

"I am rather glad, on the whole, that you are not my sister," remarked the young man, apparently quite unmoved by Dolly's criticisms; "but tell me what you would like to have me do. I should be willing to do a good deal."

"Oh, I only thought that, if you ever had any plans for another sort of life and knew that I—that other people took an interest in them, it might make a difference."

"It would make a difference—a great difference," said young Gerald, earnestly; "and you do take a little interest in me," he added, "even if you are not my sister—a very little!"

"Yes," admitted Dolly, looking up from under her hat. Then, as he started forward, with what desperate intent he himself only knew, she continued, breathlessly: "But not enough for that—oh, no!"

And she made a little rush past him, disappearing through the trees in a manner which she always afterwards regretted.

"It was so undignified," she reflected. And then she reproached herself for her blushes and needless confusion, atoning for her misdeeds by bidding them all good-bye the next morning, with unapproachable dignity, and assuring Cousin Gerald, as he helped her into the train, that she had left her address with Mrs. Henderson.

Then the train rolled away; she shed a few furtive tears, but dried the salt drops with angry resolve.

Six weeks later, she was sitting with Lillian in the back parlour, discussing family affairs. Indeed, they have done little else since their return, for Mrs. Miller could no longer conceal the fact that their fortune was irretrievably lost, and there were questions of the greatest importance to be settled. Lillian, as the betrothed of Mr. Clement Rich, had an assured future.

"Of course," said Dorothy, "I can take care of myself; I can cook, and mamma will live with you; but what are we to do with Grace and her everlasting embroidery! Now, if this tiresome



Mr. Farnleigh had only proposed for Grace instead of me, everything would be right."

"But, Dolly dear," said Lillian, in her most soothing tones, "you are very brave, of course, and independent; but you know this Mr. Farnleigh is perfectly unexceptionable. Mamma says that papa used to know him. He saw you once somewhere, and fell in love with you at first sight; and I'm sure, Dolly, I can't see what else you can ask for."

"Lillian, you have no more heart than a kitten. If he fell in love with me I didn't with him. I don't even remember his face; and I am going to write this minute and tell him that I can't and I won't think of it."

"But you won't say it in just those words!" interposed Lillian, with a gentle air of expostulation. "Do be cautious, Dolly, and—well, it wouldn't do any harm to wait a day or so, and think it over. I'm sure I wouldn't be rash."

"No you wouldn't," exclaimed Dolly. "But I would rather be rash than calculating."

At that moment, Grace came in with a card. "It is Mr. Farnleigh," she said, "and he wants to see you, Dorothy, in the library."

"Then I shall be spared the trouble of writing a letter," said Dolly, scornfully. "Very kind of him, I am sure, to call for his dismissal," and she left the room.

Dorothy was gone a long time, and the two girls awaited her return with impatience.

"I shouldn't think it would take so long to say no," said Grace, meditatively. "If it were yes, now, one could imagine how it might."

"Certainly," admitted Lillian, with an air of experience, "one might."

At length Mrs. Miller, who had also been summoned to the library, came upstairs, looking more contented than her daughters had seen her since the failure of the house of Lee, Hubbard and Sons, which had involved them in its downfall.

"Mamma, do tell us what it all means!" called Grace.

Mrs. Miller sat down in an easy chair, and rested her head against its high-cushioned back.

"Mamma," repeated Grace; but before Mrs. Miller had time to reply to the eager query, Dorothy came in with her own explanation.

"Come down," she said, "and be presented to your future brother-in-law, Mr. Gerald Farnleigh. I have known and—liked him all the summer, but it did not occur to me to ask if Aunt Helen's Cousin Gerald had any other name. He allowed me to call him Mr. Gerald, and now he declares that I am as much of an impostor as he."

"So you didn't refuse him, after all?" said Lillian.

"Why, no. I—I was so surprised that I—I suppose I forgot it," answered Dolly. "At all events, it is too late now."

THERE are many curious things sold in the Russian markets, and one can buy eels and snakes and chicken legs. Lambs' feet are sold as a great delicacy, and calves' feet are bought for soup.

The Chinese peasant wears a turban, loose coat and short and very baggy trousers, all of blue. The Chinese soldier wears the same, with an overall sleeveless smock, or long waistcoat, buttoning on the right shoulder, edged down the neck, arms and skirt, and down the front with broad "facings." The breast and back are decorated with a one-foot bull's-eye with characters on it. This is all the character the Chinese soldier possesses. The bull's-eye would be a very convenient mark for any enemy if the soldier would give him a chance of shooting him, but the bull's-eye is only worn to raise false hopes, for no sooner does he arrive dangerously near the enemy than he dons the garb of war to disappear as an innocent civilian. He is usually armed with a muzzle-loader or standard, both equally harmless weapons.

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## THE LOST STAR.

—101—

### CHAPTER XLIII.

THE last ball of the season attracted an enormous crowd to Hyde Park-gardens, and carriage after carriage set down its burden of fashion and frivolity at Lady Augusta Craven's hospitable doors.

The masculine element preponderated to an unusual degree, for a whisper had passed from club to club that a new heiress was to make her debut in London life—an heiress with a fortune that might have belonged to a Princess out of the Arabian Nights, and a face such as an artist might have seen in his dreams, but never been able to realise on canvas. Beauty and riches combined! Such an "ensemble" was not to be met with every day of the week. The impecunious flirt began to reckon his chances, as he fastened his glittering "solitaire" in the centre of his diaphanous shirt; the confirmed bachelor began to reflect that, after all, matrimony might have its consolations; and every male that was fortunate enough to get an invitation, either through personal acquaintance or the interest of friends, resolved to come and look at the prize, whether he had a hope of winning it or no—even if a prior engagement imperatively called him elsewhere.

The two sisters were dressed exactly alike, but Lady Augusta had wisely insisted that there should be some difference between them, to prevent constant mistakes by their partners; so Ruby had chosen yellow roses for her flowers, and Violet the darkest red.

Violet was bending over a bouquet of exquisite roses, when her sister came in to see if she were ready.

"Who sent you those flowers!" she asked at once, stooping to bury her own face in their fragrance. "If Sir Arthur had not thought of me, I should have had to buy mine for myself!"

"Mr. Jerningham always supplies me with a bouquet," with a fleeting blush, followed by a sigh.

"Indeed! that looks very suspicious! I shall keep my eyes wide open to-night. Come along, I think we are rather late," leading the way to the door.

"He is not coming—neither he nor any of the party. Aunt Augusta thinks that the old general, Lady Chester's father, who has been dying for the last twelve months somewhere down at Cannes, has at last made up his mind to finish it off. I wish he had done it long ago; any time but just now"—very usefully.

"Yes, you are disappointed, and so am I," rejoined Ruby. It was impossible to say more, for they were followed down the stairs by an admiring concourse of maids; and yet there were many questions which Ruby was longing to ask, for she had begun to suspect that Captain Marston was already supplanted by her own old friend, Harold Jerningham. She smiled to herself, as she remembered that there was a time when she had infinitely preferred him to his brother, till somehow, by that irresistible charm of his—against her own wishes and sternest resolutions—Lord Alverley had stolen the heart out of her breast and made it for ever his own.

Would he ever come back to claim it? She thought he would, and the thought gave a joyous animation to her beauty, in which her sister's for that night at least was wanting.

The rooms were brilliantly lighted, and decked with flowers of every description; the floor was perfect, the music entrancing; admiring glances met hers on every side. Wherever she went crowds of men followed her steps, made happy by a smile or a word, or the privilege of holding either fan or bouquet if they could not obtain a dance.

After her long seclusion from the world—after the long, weary days of poverty and neglect—the change was delightful, and she enjoyed it with the easy abandon of a child.

The humble governess at Chester Chase who had been obliged to put on her own skates and travel second-class, and take the lowest seat at

every feast, transformed as if by the wand of Cinderella's fairy into the beauty of a London belle; sought after by the rich, the *blasé* and the noble, as well as by every other man who had eyes in his head and pulses to be quickened by the sight of her charms.

Lady Augusta watched her niece with a gratified smile. "I knew she would be a success, by the very way in which she held her head, so differently to the ordinary run of girls. I wish the Chesters had been here to-night!"

"Miss St. Hellers, I hope you haven't forgotten me?" said an eager voice, without a bit of the fashionable drawl of London society.

"Forgotten you! No, Mr. Graves," and Ruby put her hand in his with her sweetest smile. "You remind me too forcibly that pride must have a fall."

"I never was so ashamed of myself in my life, but it is cruel of you to remind me of it directly. I was told I should see you here to-night, so I gave up a race meeting on purpose. Don't you think you owe me a dance for that?" stretching out his hand for the card, which was dangling from her fan.

"If I owe I cannot pay, so it will make no difference."

"Oh, yes, it will, because then I can claim the first chance. You don't look as if London air disagreed with you," looking down at her, with open admiration in his eyes. But where have you been hiding all this while?"

"How can you tell I was hidden, if you never came to seek?"

"There can be no hunt if the fox won't come out of his hole."

"You will certainly be too late, if you wait to order your horse until you see his brush."

"I should have waited for nothing," he began eagerly, but broke off: "Mrs. Upton sent you a heap of messages—but I've forgotten them all."

"Just like a man! A man thinks nothing of a message—a woman everything."

"Some messages—especially those from women to men—are worth their weight in gold."

"I hope a little more, as breath weighs nothing."

"I am such a fool, but you know what I mean; for instance, if you sent me a message by a fellow, and he didn't deliver it, I would strangle him on the spot."

"What spot?" with a smile. "If he didn't give it, you would know nothing about it."

"He would know something about it, when I found it out. Miss St. Hellers, you can't mean to treat an old friend so shabbily as to leave him entirely out of the run!"

"No; when I come across my uncle I will ask him to have 'an extra' on purpose—when the dowagers go in to supper."

"Thanks!" with a grateful glance, as the Marquis of Merehaven came up to claim his partner.

The two sisters danced opposite to one another, in a set of Lancers. To Ruby it seemed like a dream, as she moved forward with a happy smile on her lips, and met Violet's eyes. They had been separated so long, and passed through such depths of misfortune, that it was difficult to realise that the whole bright pageant would not pass away, like the transformation scene of a pantomime, and leave them in their humble domicile at Chatterton-street, with anxious thoughts about the butcher's bill, or other prosaic details. As they passed each other in the act of crossing over, Lord Merehaven smiled.

"Your sister is a very like you," he said, "but yet there is a difference."

"Yes; Violet's hair is not quite the same shade as mine, and her eyes are darker."

"Then your lashes must be longer; but I was not thinking of them—that is to say," with a laugh, "I was not talking of them. Your sister looks as if something had passed—and you as if something were to come—the one regretful—the other expectant."

"Of what?"

"Ah!" with a shake of his close-cropped head "I haven't the clue. You might tell me, but of course you won't."

"Perhaps I cannot tell myself. I am very happy to-night, and that is enough for me."

"Enough! I should think so—it is more than half the world can say. Have you dropped down from the skies, and brought some of their brightness with you?"

"No; but I have come from vegetating in the country, and this is a pleasant contrast."

"A contrast! yes. Some people might prefer the buttercups."

"Yes, if they couldn't get them—only then."

"Of course, the greatest charm lies in the unattainable. I should like to be lying at your feet in a dewy hayfield at the present moment, with a breath of fresh air in our faces," wiping his forehead, to show how much he was in need of it, "and nobody else to get in my way."

"The dewy hayfield would be rather damp, and sure to leave a legacy of aches and spiders."

"You will not let me be romantic, even when I try, in obedience to a certain spell I find in you, to be so against the grain."

"Never try against the grain—you are sure not to succeed," smiling at his efforts to get through the crowd.

"When I try with the grain, and with the whole strength of my will into the bargain—do you think there is any chance?" looking down into her eyes, in a way that he meant to be especially fascinating.

"It depends upon what you try for. Choose an easy object, and you need take but very little trouble to win it!"

"Easy things are sure to be so confoundingly uninteresting," his eyes roaming towards a group of girls who were watching his every movement or gesture with the liveliest interest. I should like to try after something I was not so sure of. Even a tiger-hunt would lose its excitement if you knew exactly where to find the tiger."

"Then you must take some trouble, that is all," with a careless indifference that nettled his pride.

"I shall!" emphatically. "Shall you ride in the Row to-morrow?"

"No, I haven't found a horse to suit me."

"May I call in the afternoon?"

"You may leave a card, but we are sure to be out."

"Are you never in to five o'clock tea?" eagerly.

"Yes, very often, and intimate friends drop in as they please."

"May I forestall a hoped-for intimacy and do the same?"

"This is my aunt's house; you must ask her leave, not mine," slowly unfurling her fan.

"Give me yours, and that will be half the battle."

"I have nothing to do with it."

"It would be you that brought me, you must know that!"

"How could I bring you?" with a smile, "if I never said come!"

"By the force of involuntary attraction."

"Miss St. Hellers, this dance is mine," and Archie Graves eagerly extended his arm, as the first bars of the longed-for extra floated through the now half-empty room.

The Marquis stood aside with a frown of mortification. It was absurd to be thrown over by a fellow whom he didn't know by sight, and who clearly wasn't in his set. Any other girl in the room would have jumped at the chance of a prolonged flirtation with "the best match" of the season; but heiresses always gave themselves such infernal airs. Reflecting thus, he lounged against the doorway in a pronounced fit of the sulks, whilst the two objects of his displeasure floated round the room in happy enjoyment of ample space.

"Our steps go very well together, but we mustn't be too proud of ourselves like we were on the ice;" and Ruby, utterly exhausted by the unusual exertion after her quiet life during the past year, stopped still, and leant against the framework of one of the windows, as if for support.

"You are tired out, let us come on to the balcony;" and Archie, alarmed at her paleness, carried her off at once into the freshness of the starlit night outside. Some more adventurous spirits had stolen down into the gardens below, and the balcony for the time being was deserted.

Ruby scarcely knew why, but as she raised her tired eyes to the tranquil sky, her thoughts flew far away to her once discarded lover. Where was he now? Thinking of her, perhaps, as a heartless girl, who had not known her own mind when the game was in her own hands.

A lady came out of the ballroom with her partner, and, after talking about the heat of the room, the pretty effect of the lights in the distance, &c., retired again within the lace curtains.

"Miss Deyacourt," said Archie Graves, as soon as she had disappeared. "She was down at Chester Chase last Christmas, and there was a report that she was going to marry poor Alverley. I almost wonder that she is here to-night, but they say that she has a golden nugget instead of a heart. I do like a woman to have a soft point somewhere."

"If she were head over ears in love with him," said Ruby, rather amused, "that is no reason why she should stay away from a dance because his octogenarian grandfather had at last made up his mind to die."

"His grandfather!" in surprise, "I had not heard of that."

"That is why Lady Clementina and Mr. Jerningham are not here. I thought, of course, you knew. I was terribly disappointed, for I wanted very much to see them, after all that has happened. Ah, Mr. Graves, weren't you surprised to hear that I had grown into somebody of importance?" looking up into his face with a smile.

"Yes, very much," with a grave pre-occupied air, "you always did seem somebody of importance to me, though—the tin has made no change."

"Then you are different to the rest of the world. Poor Lady Caester was always kind to me. I wonder if she feels her father's death very much!"

"I should think her son had put it out of her mind."

"Why?" with a convulsive start; "has he been doing anything extraordinary?"

Before he could answer the butler pulled aside the lace curtains, and peered into the dim light.

"Miss Ruby?" he said, doubtfully.

"Here," she answered, with a sudden pang in her heart, as she guessed it must be a messenger of evil.

"A boy brought this," holding out a small packet on a silver tray. "He says he has travelled night and day to bring it here in time, and he was delayed by going down first to Sunnydale."

In an instant she knew what it was, and the lights in the park below seemed to dance before her eyes. She tore open the papers in eager frightened haste, and out rolled the serpent ring!

"He's dying!" she gasped, looking up with startled eyes. "He promised to send it me. Take me to him," holding out her hands like a child. "Oh, Heaven, I must be there!" And then, earth and sky and twinkling lights vanished, and she sank upon the nearest seat in a dead faint. Alverley's message had reached her, but it was not too late!

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

"BRING a glass of water quick, and call Sir Arthur," and Graves picked up the paper with his left hand, whilst his right arm was supporting Ruby's fainting figure on the chair. He did not mean to read it, but his eyes fell on the words "Hotel de la Méditerranée, Nice," written in a hand he did not know; and the thought flashed across his mind directly that this was a last message from Lord Alverley himself.

Poor fellow! and poor Ruby St. Hellers. To have loved a girl like that, and to have lost her by a foolish hair-brained act of folly like a duel! It must be hard—cruelly hard indeed! He cast a glance of reverent tenderness on the beautiful face calm and motionless, and perfect in its symmetry as if carved out of marble by the hand of a Greek sculptor. It was a blow to his

own honest heart to find that her love had been pledged to someone else; but he would not think of his own pain, so absorbed was he in the fear of what she must suffer when the long lashes lifted, and her eyes took their next look at a world which the tidings brought hastily by boat and train had made so suddenly desolate.

"What is this!" said Sir Arthur, stepping quickly on to the balcony with a glass of water in his hand, and a much perturbed expression on his frank face. "My poor girl," bending over her, and motioning to Graves to let him take his place. "Was it the heat of the room, or some bad news that foreign fellow brought her!"

"Bad news. She opened the paper and fainted," not caring to mention the ring, lest it should be a betrayal of confidence.

"A little water on the forehead. What do you say?" looking up at Graves, in great perplexity.

The young man took out his handkerchief, and pouring some water on the corner, laid it gently across the smooth, broad brow. A few minutes of anxious watching, and then the dark eyes slowly opened, and she smiled.

"That is right, dear," said Sir Arthur, cheerfully; "drink a little water, and you'll come to."

She drank some water obediently, and looked round as if trying to remember, and then down at the ring in her hand. Her face changed, and she tried to scramble to her feet.

"I must go to him, there's not a moment to be lost. Oh, uncle! you'll take me!" lifting her white face to his in anxious pleading.

"Where? I don't understand."

"To Nice—to Lord Alverley. He has sent for me, and I promised to go!"

"But wait a bit; we must consult your aunt. You cannot go running after a young man half across the Continent," looking quite bewildered.

"But I was to be his wife. Didn't you know it?" still looking at him with tearless, agonized eyes, "and when he is dying, don't you think that I will go to him? If you won't take me I'll ask Mr. Graves," scarcely knowing what she said. The young fellow started forward as if to show his eagerness, "and if he won't, I will go alone."

"But, but! if you must, nobody shall take you but myself. There's a boy downstairs, I'll question him, and see what he says." He was off before she could stop him, and she was left alone on the balcony with the young squire.

She put her hand to her forehead as if to collect her thoughts, and then stooped to pick up the bit of paper which had fallen again upon the floor. Graves gave it to her, his heart swelling with pity. There was nothing on earth at that moment which he would not have done for her, if it could have brought back the brightness of an hour ago.

The music began again, and the dancing was resumed with spirit; stray couples came in from the gardens, too much occupied with themselves to give anything but a passing stare at the silent pair on the balcony.

"Mr. Graves," she said, suddenly, and her voice seemed to have changed from its usual tone, "I must see that boy myself, and I must get hold of my maid to tell her to pack my things."

"Shall I bring the boy here, and take a message to your maid?"

"No, I will go myself; no one will notice anything if we are quick."

He looked at her white face, and wondered at her courage. Skirting round the edge of the dancing, they reached the drawing-room without exciting remark. Lord Merehaven was lounging as before in the doorway. He looked from one to the other with a curious glance, seeing that something had gone wrong, and not able to guess what it was.

"When am I to have my promised dance, Miss St. Hellers?"

She turned away with a shiver.

"N—next year!"

Someone laughed, and she hurried downstairs.



In a little room beyond the end of the hall they found Sir Arthur and a foreign-looking youth, who seemed overcome with fatigue. His sleepy eyes, however, regained some of their usual vivacity when Ruby, pale and strangely composed, stood before him in her glittering ball-dress.

All he could tell was that milor had fought a duel with the Capitaine Marston and had been wounded. If mademoiselle wished to see him alive, she must start at once. Monsieur Philippe told him to say that milor's first thought was for her.

The slow tears ran down Ruby's cheeks, but she brushed them away hastily. She might cry her eyes out afterwards, but now there was no time.

"I shall find him at the Hotel de la Mediterranée!"

"Yes, mademoiselle; on the Promenade des Anglais, which is all spread with straw."

"Uncle, when is the train?"

"Forty minutes past seven, and it is now," looking at his watch, "a quarter past one. You have had no supper, and you look like a ghost already. How can I take you in such a state?"

"I shan't break down—indeed I shan't; and Simpson can bring me something upstairs. Uncle, it is very good of you," hesitating as she was about to leave the room.

"Nonsense, my dear. A trip to Nice is just the sort of thing to do me good!"

She gave her hand to Archie without a word, and hurried up the backstairs to her own bedroom.

"What the deuce did the fellow go fighting a duel for, I should like to know," he muttered to himself, willing to do a kind action, but reserving the right to grumble.

"It was, so they say, for the honour of mademoiselle," said Louis Duvernoy, looking up from the wine and food which had been brought for him.

"And who dared to breathe a word against her?" facing round fiercely.

"The Capitaine Marston."

"Humph! Graves! After that I can say nothing. If I had been twenty years younger, I might have been such a fool myself!"

"I'd do it again, if I could only come across him," said Graves, eagerly. "What do you say, Sir Arthur? Don't you think really I might be of use to you if I came with you?"

Sir Arthur shook his head with a smile.

"No; one hot-headed fellow on our hands is quite enough at a time. I suppose Lady Chester and Jerningham have been sent for?"

"Yes, monsieur. They were telegraphed for at once."

"And now I must go and do the agreeable to all these people, whom I wish at Jericho, and try to find a quiet moment to tell my wife. What she'll say to it all, goodness only knows! I should like to play her a scurvy trick, and slip away without telling her."

Meanwhile Violet, in happy unconsciousness of all that had happened, was dancing and laughing, and enjoying herself, with a grace and a charm of manner that never forsook either of the sisters, and which fascinated men almost more than their beauty.

Walls succeeded walls, and the musicians played with unflagging zeal, like well-regulated machines warranted not to stop till they were ordered to. Many eyes had roamed round the rooms in search of Ruby, and Violet's, perhaps, more constantly than any others.

"If Lord Alverley were here, I could understand it," she thought to herself, as tired after an endless polka, she entreated Lord Marchaven to stop. "Is anything the matter, auntie?" she said aloud, as her aunt passed her, talking earnestly to Sir Arthur.

"Forty minutes past seven from Victoria! She can never do it. Poor child! the shock must have been terrible."

"What is it? Has anything happened?" and Violet laid her hand on Lady Augusta's arm to compel her attention.

"Yes. We have just heard of the death of a friend—at least he's dying."

"And where's Ruby?" feeling instinctively that there was some connection between the two.

"Upstairs," with a glance at Lord Marchaven. "She has danced till she can dance no more!"

"She's not ill?"

"No. Why should she be? Go on, my dear. It will not do to let it flag."

"I thought you said something about a train," still only half satisfied.

"So I did. It does not do to be too inquisitive, does it?" turning with an attempt at a smile to the Marquis.

"No, indeed, Lady Augusta; Bluebeard's wife has taught us that. Talking of dying," he added with a drawl, as Violet dropped down into a chair at the concluding bars of the dance, and he took his place beside her, "they say that Alverley has given Miss Deyncourt this slip after all. He has gone to the only place where she was sure not to follow, unless she couldn't help it!" with a cynical smile.

"What do you mean?" looking up at him with wide-open, startled eyes.

"He's been seeing Don Quixote at Monte Carlo, and come to grief. Won't you have an ice?"

"Then he has been losing a lot of money again?"

"Losing his money, that's taken for granted. Never was such a fellow for ill-luck; but this time he has been losing his life as well. Hullo, are you ill?"

"Is it true?" she gasped, turning as white as her dress, for in a moment she thought of the despair she knew this must cast over her sister.

"True as gospel, but I wish to heavens I had never mentioned it. I never met him here, so I thought you scarcely knew him. Don't let us talk of it now—it doesn't do."

She could not trust her voice to ask another question, and felt she must not yield to her impulse to rush upstairs after Ruby, so she asked him to take her to the balcony—there she could think it out in comparative peace. This was the reason why Harold could not come. He must have sent her the bouquet just before he started, because, of course, he had gone.

Surely he must have loved her not a little to have thought of her at all at such a moment; and she—she liked him better than any other friend—that was all she knew.

She had steeled her heart against him, because it was he who had interfered between herself and Captain Marston. Knowing, by this time that he had saved her from something worse than death, with womanly inconsistency, she owed him a grudge for it, instead of being overwhelmed with gratitude, and felt that she would be shamefully disloyal to her past dream, if she allowed herself to listen to his words of love.

Now that he was away from her, and she found how sorely she missed him when he was not there, her heart softened towards him; and the tears came into her eyes, as she thought of the sorrow he must feel at his brother's death. Poor Lord Alverley! she remembered the smile with which he had asked if he could do anything for her, and wondered how she had ever found the courage to intercede for her lost lover. Then she looked up at Lord Marchaven, with the tears still hanging on her lashes. "What did he die of?"

"He was shot by Captain Marston in a duel."

She clasped her hands together with a suppressed cry, but the Marquis happened to be looking over the trees, and did not notice it, so went on: "They say he was blackguard enough to take away the character of a girl he was fond of; Marston was an utter sweep and deserved the flogging, but I'm sorry that Alverley had to pay for it."

She wanted to hear no more. Sick with grief and horror she sat perfectly silent, quivering from head to foot.

This was the man to whom her first love had been given—this was the man whom she had worshipped in her heart of hearts!

The ball was over at last, and Violet crept upstairs with a heavy heart and weary legs. She

stole softly into Ruby's room, and found every preparation made for an early journey. A box, already locked and strapped, stood outside on the landing; her hat, veil, gloves, &c., were laid upon the table. She herself was fast asleep, with the tears still wet on her white cheeks. Looking down at her fondly, with the tears running down her own, Violet dropped down on her knees, and prayed that Heaven might give her sister strength to bear this heavy trial; and then she went out of the room on tiptoe.

After a few minutes she returned, divested of her splendours and wrapped in a dressing-gown, and lying down on the sofa resolved to stay there till the morning, lest she might oversleep herself in her own room, and Ruby might be gone, without one word of sympathy from her. She thought she would lie awake the whole time, but nature was too much for her, and she was soon sleeping like a child, her bright hair strewn over the pillow, her small hands clasped as if in prayer.

It was thus that Ruby found her, when she started from her bed as the clock struck six, so dreadfully afraid lest she might be late. She felt inclined to run to her sister and throw her arms round her neck, but contented herself with casting pitiful glances in her direction whilst she hastily performed her toilette. When her hat was on, she knelt down by her side and kissed her. Violet was awake in a moment. "Oh, my darling—if I could only do anything for you!"

"Pray that I may be in time," with quivering lips—"that is all!"

## CHAPTER XLV.

Oh, the long journey from Victoria to Dover—from Dover to Calais—from Calais to Paris; the long weary waiting till the train started from the Lyons station; the endless night with its frequent stoppages; that shivering hour before the dawn, when Sir Arthur got out at some station on the line—she did not care to inquire which it was—and brought her a steaming cup of coffee; the gradual breaking of the day, as the railway skirted the edge of the shore, and the wide expanse of the Mediterranean awakened into a sea of glory; the scorching sun of midday, which turned the tolerably comfortable carriage into an oven; and then the feeling of unconquerable dread which came over Ruby as the train steamed slowly into the railway station at Nice, and she knew that the end of the journey had come at last.

She had longed for this hour, with all the passion of her heart; and now she was afraid to go out and meet it.

The boy, Louis Duvernoy, who acted as courier on the way, saw after the luggage, called a *calèche* and pair, and saved Sir Arthur and the mystified Simpson all trouble.

Ruby said nothing as they drove rapidly through the town, past the quay, up the Promenade des Anglais in the blazing sunshine. She saw nothing, and heard nothing, but the beating of her own heart, which seemed to stop when the carriage stopped at the principal door of the Hotel de la Mediterranée.

Sir Arthur, who looked very grave, went up the steps into the hall, and made some inquiries.

He came down then with a more cheerful aspect, and said briefly, "We are in time!" as he held out his hand to help her out.

She was trembling so that she could scarcely walk, but she had promised not to break down, and she kept her word. As they were being conducted down what seemed to be an endless corridor, they met Harold Jerningham, who started back in surprise. "This is good of you! how did you hear?"

"He sent for her!" said Sir Arthur, shortly. "How is he?"

"This may save him!" his voice was hoarse, his face wan; one look at it seemed to take the last ray of hope from Ruby's heart.

They went on down a few steps up a great many others till they reached a door, where Harold stopped. "They were obliged to move him here—out of the noise. Perhaps I had better go in



"PRAY THAT I MAY BE IN TIME," SAID RUBY, WITH QUIVERING LIPS, "THAT IS ALL!"

first." He opened the door and went in, leaving it ajar.

A voice—which she could scarcely recognize as that of Alverley's—it was so changed—rose high in an incoherent flow of words, which sent a thrill through the listener's breast. He was calling—calling—calling for somebody who would not come; every now and then the words were quite distinct, and vibrated through Ruby's heart; then they sank away into an indistinct murmur, and she could only understand the vague longing which breathed through them all.

Then Harold opened the door, and beckoned to her.

"It is our last chance!" he whispered to Sir Arthur, who nodded an assent.

With faltering steps Ruby advanced across the darkened room towards the small, white bed on which Lord Alverley lay.

Something seemed to draw her back, and she stopped, fearing to go forward. Then the voice, which had always seemed sweeter than any music in her ears, murmured in accents of the softest entreaty—

"Ruby—my Ruby, my own lost star! come back to me—come back!"

And, pressing her hand to her heart, she ran forward, caught his hand to her lips, and raised her face to his—so wan and white—with a world of passionate longing in her eyes.

"I am here! don't you know me—look at me, dearest—you sent for me, and I've come!"

The sound of her voice seemed to calm him at once; a quiver ran through his wasted frame—he tried to raise his head, but it fell back helplessly on the pillow.

"Not—Ruby?"

"Yes! Ruby herself. I've come as fast as ever I could!"

"No; she is married—she doesn't want me—Marston's here"—his voice rising, his fever returning—"he shall have it if he likes—it's an insult, sir—a lie—a foul-mouthed liar. Oh, Heaven! I loved her, and she won't come!"

"Alverley, listen to me!" in piteous entreaty,

as if by the force of her love she could compel his wandering reason to return.

"Who says Alverley? Not she—she never called me that. She never loved me half enough!"

"Alverley, look at me just once!" He started, and his roaming eyes settled suddenly upon her face. The brilliant light went out of them, till they grew softer and softer, as if he gradually realized what they were resting on. He gave a deep sigh, and the ghost of a smile hovered round his lips.

"Is it you?" he said, faintly.

"Yes, Ruby—your own Ruby!"

"Come to see me die?"

"No, to nurse you back to life!"

"So good of you, but too late," in an almost inarticulate whisper. His head fell back on her arm, his eyes closed, his lips parted as if with their last breath; she thought the shadow of death was already creeping over his face, and her heart felt ready to burst.

Harold hurried into the room, poured out some restorative, and held it to his brother's lips. They refused to open, and the medicine was spilt on the counterpane. He put it down in despair.

"If he cannot take it, it is all up with him. I must fetch the doctor and my mother."

"Give it to me," said Ruby, quietly. She took the glass in her hand, and bent over the bed, with a voiceless prayer in her heart.

"Lord Alverley, drink this—drink it for Ruby's sake!"

His lashes shook, he moved his head slightly forward, and drank.

When Harold returned with his mother and Doctor Morton, who had accompanied them from England, the patient had fallen into a quiet sleep.

"This may save him, after all!" said the doctor, with an air of relief. "But how it came about at the present crisis, I am at a loss to conceive."

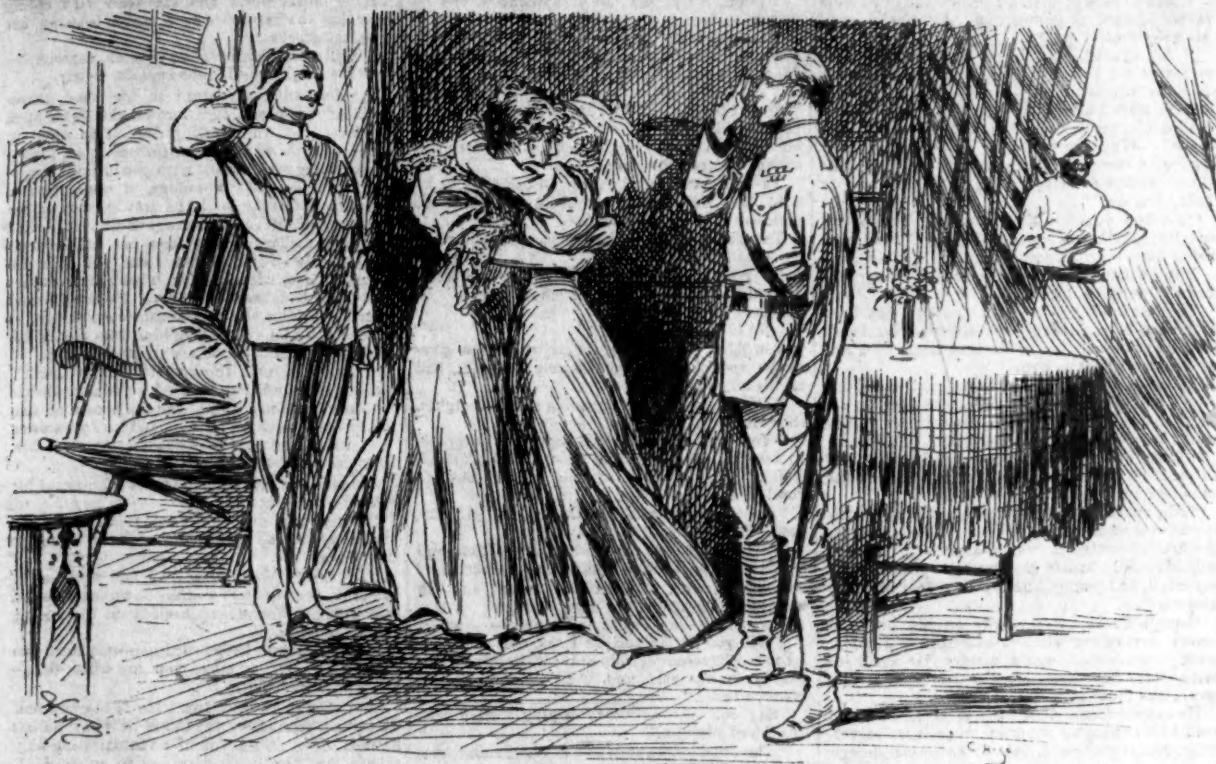
"We owe it to Miss St. Hellers," said Harold, in a whisper, with a glance at the empty glass.

Lady Chester folded Ruby in her arms, and then drew her gently from the room. If she had saved her son's life, she had but one wish left—that he might live long enough to make Ruby her daughter.

(To be continued.)

**THE ERRATIC NEEDLE.**—One of Russia's innumerable mysteries is the erratic behavior of the magnetic needle in many parts of the great empire. The compass is freaky enough anywhere, but it seems to take a particular delight in refusing to point north for the subjects of the Czar. French and Russian scientists have recently been investigating this subject on the vast central plain between Moscow and Barakov. The greatest aberrations were found in the province of Kurak, the capital town of which is some six hundred miles almost due south of Moscow. In the northern part of the province, near Tim, the needle deflects twenty degrees; farther south, in the province of Staroi Oskol, up to thirty degrees, while in the south-east of the province, about one hundred and fifty miles south of Tim, the deflection is over ninety-six degrees, the needle standing almost perpendicular and pointing nearer east and west than north and south. This reversal of the magnetic force may have some curious effects. A number of new railways are building in that region and the engineers are interested in finding out whether the durability of their lines will sustain the long accepted theory that those rails last best which are parallel with the magnetic meridians. As these run east and west over a considerable part of Russia it will be the north and south lines that first show signs of wear, whereas such lines in other countries are the more easily maintained in repair.





RONALD MAY STARTS TO HIS FEET, SALUTING HIS COLONEL, WHILE THE SISTERS EMBRACE ONE ANOTHER.

## BROWN AS A BERRY.

—101—

## CHAPTER XVII.

PERHAPS it is the keenest disappointment that Captain Carew has ever experienced to be obliged to acknowledge that the girl he has lately grown to love is not so pure and unapproachable as he had thought her.

If his life has had less of pleasure than that of most men, so also has it had less sorrow; for surely love is the parent of pain, and if we could live without the one, we might avoid the other. He feels no anger, no jealousy, only grief that she should so have lowered herself as to permit the familiarities of a man so little to be trusted or liked as Spencer Blythe.

Some men might have looked upon it as a trifling indiscretion, and excused it on the score of youth; but to him a woman is a being so set apart, that he cannot believe anyone would dare to offend her maiden pride without direct invitation so to do.

He has no plan of giving up the friendship that was so sweet; he is only resolved that now, come what may, he will never take her to be his wife; and because he cannot adapt himself to these altered circumstances and thoughts, he keeps away from her all that next day, and will not even look in her direction.

Berry is first bewildered and then indignant at his altered mien. She has no suspicion that he can have a cause for it, unless he thinks it unladylike of her to have batted with him and accepted his gift; but if it is that, why did he ask her to do the one, and insist upon her doing the other?

Another fancy is more bitter still to bear, and yet it gives her a certain strength which she might have otherwise have lacked. What if he has repented the hasty words he spoke the day before, and wishes to show that he meant nothing by them?

At this idea all Berry's pride rises up in arms,

and she can scarcely contain her anger. Captain Carew wonders a little at the flashing eyes and compressed lips which meet his gaze when once by accident he passes her on the stairs. Is it possible, she thinks, that it is he who is somehow to blame; and how is it that Mr. Blythe never approaches her once?

He might have thought that he had been mistaken in what he had seen and heard, and he would almost have welcomed the loss of sight and hearing that would have restored her to him true and sweet as of old; but on the next day, Berry, loth above all things to seem to be wearing the willow for his sake, listens to Mr. Blythe's plea for pardon, and, on promise of amendment, again receives him into favour.

After that the struggle is over, and he believes the worst.

Mrs. Sowerby's delight is unbounded. The possible future becomes so real to her at last that she can scarcely forbear calling Berry Lady Blythewood, and treating her with the respect that would be due to her in such a case.

"Some girls have such luck!" she one day says, enviously, to Mr. Le Sage; but his reply rather startles her.

"Do you mean little Berry Cardell? For my part I think she is rather unfortunate to have attracted the attentions of Mr. Blythe. He is not a marrying man."

"Nonsense!" sharply. "Mr. Blythe's intentions are unmistakable."

"Mrs. Sowerby, did you ever hear the approved definition of the word 'flirtation'?" is the seemingly irrelevant reply.

"No."

"Attentions without intentions. I think that describes this case exactly."

"I am sure you are mistaken. He seems so very devoted," she answers, uneasily; but though she tries to reassure herself, she cannot feel so certain as before that all will come right. She had thought it all depended on Berry's will; but what if he is really only flirting and compromising her with his unmeaning attentions?

"I am glad our girls will not be grown up for some time," she says to her husband, with a sigh over her future responsibilities as chaperone.

"So am I," returns Captain Sowerby, deciding with some reason that his present expenses are sufficient drain upon his slender purse.

"I wish they had all been boys!" she says again, thinking of her own unsuccessful matrimonial venture, and of the pitfalls that generally surround her sex.

But to this remark Captain Sowerby wisely makes no reply.

Mr. Le Sage is not the only one who doubts the truth of Mr. Blythe's apparent devotion. Captain Carew has been eye-witness to too many of his flirtations to readily believe in him; and though it is true that this girl is, in his eyes at least, immeasurably superior to those others, still he knows that a man's nature is not readily changed, and this one is almost incorrigibly fickle.

One evening he is driven to openly interfere. Mr. Blythe has made some laughing remark about "the pretty little gipsy," and his tone is so insultingly familiar that Captain Carew can bear it no longer.

"If the lady you mean had a brother on board I think you would hesitate before speaking of her like that. As it is, if you offend again I shall take upon myself to resent the implied slight, which I am sure is equally distasteful to us all."

There is a murmur of assent in reply. There are only a few subalterns present, and though they had themselves hesitated to pull their senior over the coals, they are not averse to see it done by another. A general chorus begins of "quite right;" "too bad, Blythe;" "I agree with Carew," and so on, under cover of which the person attacked has time to recover from his surprise.

"I thought Sowerby stood in that happy position, and envied him accordingly. Begad, I wish I had such a pretty sister!" with a half laugh.

If Captain Sowerby had been here I should not need to have spoken."

"Not so sure of that. I believe the gentleman rather favours my pretensions. At least, I know his wife does."

"You admit them to be pretensions. I thought you were not a marrying man!" says a subaltern, in some surprise.

"No more I am. And one thing is certain I shall not marry a lady whose name I do not even know. Why, it wouldn't be legal! Fancy having to swear at the altar, 'I, Spencer, take thee, Captain Sowerby's charge, to have and to hold, &c., &c.'"

"Le Sage calls her Miss Scardale," replies the subaltern, rather nervously, Captain Carew's eyes being fixed sternly upon him.

But he has been drawn into the discussion and will not give it up.

The fact is, Berry, by some mistake, has been entered as Miss Sowerby, and Laurence Le Sage's affected pronunciation of her true name does not tend to clear up the error.

"I called her Miss Scardale and she asked me who I meant, and she also denies the patronage of Sowerby, so I don't see what else I can do. She won't let me call her Berry—yet."

"Berry would be quite sufficient for the exigencies of the marriage service," laughs the subaltern again.

"Ah, yes, I suppose it would; but I don't think it will ever come to that. Be comforted, Carew; the first attractive matron I meet after landing will effectually banish this pretty spinstress from my mind, and you will have a clear field, with my blessing."

Captain Carew turns angrily on his heel and leaves the saloon without vouchsafing a reply. Such conversation would always jar upon his taste, but that Berry should be spoken of in terms like those galls him to the quick.

He cannot forget that he has loved her, and even in his thoughts the past tense is so regretfully, tenderly uttered, that it seems as though it were the present still. He is half-inclined to warn her, but knows how such warnings are inevitably received, and besides, how could he deal such a blow to her pride!

How could she bear to hear what the whole ship will now soon know, that she is being trifled with and scorned? His heart softens wondrously to her; for, in spite of her coquetry and that goings which is as yet unexplained, she is a woman, and has no one to protect her. Once or twice during the day he addresses her, and in the evening, as she stands at the saloon door swinging her hat to and fro in her hand, he comes up again.

"You are going on deck?" he begins, questioningly.

"I—I don't know."

"You are getting tired of the inevitable after-dinner migration?"

"Oh! so tired. I never thought that life at sea could be so wearisome, so—so hateful!"

He asks no questions, knowing even better than she what real reason she has for her distaste. And yet he is touched by her distress, and has resolved that come what may he will stand by her, and show that his reverence for her is as high as though he had never loved her, and been deceived.

For sole reply he gently forces the shawl from her arm, and wraps it round her.

"The Southern Cross is visible to-night! Come and see it!" he says, persuasively.

And she complies.

Her whole manner is changed in a moment, and she regains some of that buoyancy which during the last few days she had lost. A new lightness is in her step as she runs up the companion-ladder, and a new brightness in her eyes.

When she is at last on deck, seated at the farthest end of the vessel, with Captain Carew at her side, wearing something of his old air of devotion, she so far recovers her natural spirits as to disagree with him.

"Four stars placed in opposite position, not all of them at equal distances. Captain Carew, I don't think much of your Cross; it is horribly rickety. Not even a Maltese one!" she says, saucily, in answer to his explanation where to look.

"I am sorry you are disappointed," he returns, gravely; "but we are not looking at it from its best vantage point. If we were over there, or there," with a comprehensive sweep of his arm in two different directions.

"Ah! then, of course, it would be a far more imposing sight. The sights we cannot see are always so imposing!" she interrupts him, with one of those merry, ringing laughs that lately it strikes him now he has not heard.

There is something in the sound so alien to his suspicions that he cannot bring himself at the moment to believe in them.

The old glamour steals over him, and he edges closer to her side.

"For the sake of the finest sight in the world, I would not be elsewhere than here!" he whispers below his breath.

"No! And why not?"

The calm, questioning glance which she gives as she speaks somewhat discomposes him, and causes him to hesitate.

With a woman's quick reading of his thoughts, she interrupts him again.

"You are like all Englishmen, I suppose, contemptuous of anything in the way of sight-seeing. Besides, none of this can be new to you!"

"I beg your pardon. One thing is very new!"

And this time she does not question him, and a silence ensues, only broken by the sound of the ship cutting through the waters, and the waves dashing against its side.

Presently he breaks in impetuously—

"Will you pardon me, if I ask one question. I know I have no right to ask, but it has lain so heavily on my mind and your answer can give me such relief."

"Say on," she answers, turning toward him in evident surprise.

"The other night at Malta I was behind you when Mr. Blythe helped you from the boat. I saw him touch your shoulder and call you 'Pussy,' and—and—"

It is difficult to say all that this has meant to him until he knows whether it was an unwarranted liberty or authorized caress of which he is speaking; and feeling this at once she answers, hastily—

"Is that all? I am so glad you asked, and have so often wished to tell you!" And then in a few words she explains to him the whole affair, how her one indiscreet and childish act had been taken advantage of, and put her so much in the wrong that she had not been able to right herself since.

He listens with a certain sense of relief, and yet he had not been human, perhaps, if he had not felt a little disappointed, too, that she was not entirely blameless.

A man is so tenacious of the perfections of his lady-love, and he would have liked her to be beyond suspicion even.

Berry is utterly unconscious and utterly happy. The entanglement of the last week is explained, and satisfactorily too. If he had not loved her, why should he have resented the other man's impertinence, or cared to show displeasure at her conduct?

The little curved lips grow tremulous and shy; her eyes are downcast, so she does not see the half-dubious expression in his face.

"You do not blame me now," she murmurs, confidently; knowing how little harm was meant.

"N—no," hesitatingly; and then impulsively he adds, "Will you answer me one more question?"

"Certainly!"

"It is not from idle impertinence I ask, but sincere wish to serve you. Tell me—do you really dislike Spencer Blythe?"

"Really, truly, heartily!" she answers decidedly.

"Then take my advice and show that you do. Not suddenly, nor pointedly, but unmistakably!"

She looks at him inquisitively. What can prompt his warning? Is it jealousy, or has something happened of which she knows nothing? A woman is so helpless, so powerless against the

slander of the world, and she feels very keenly now that she has no one to stand between her and its censure.

"Will you promise?" he goes on, eagerly.

"Yes; I promise!" she repeats, slowly.

A sailor, with a lantern in his hand, passes them as she speaks, and throws the light upon her face. So white and pitiful it is now—so different from what he remembers it at first—all sparkling and radiant with youth and happiness, that he feels a twinge of compunction. What right had he to be the first to offer to her lips the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil? He ought rather to have taken her in his arms and silently sheltered her from all with his watchful love, without even letting her suspect that there had been a danger. He feels vexed with himself for the British cautiousness that is inherent in him, preventing him from risking his life's honour and happiness by placing them in her hands without further trial of her truth; but the old tradition of what a woman should be—how pure and high above the breath of suspicion—is too strong for him, and he turns away with a sigh, leaning his arms on the deck-side, and peering gloomily into the water.

Presently the sound of a gentle sobbing at his side effectually arouses him.

"Berry, my darling! what is it?" he exclaims aghast, all prudential resolves flying to the winds.

"Let me go! let me go! I am wretched!" she cries, the big tears rolling down her cheeks, and trying to disengage herself from his strong, detaining hand.

"Not until you have heard me—not until you know that I wish to make you my wife—that—that I love you, Berry!"

And then both are silent. He is startled and half-overwhelmed by the force of what he has himself said. She is full of an intoxicating happiness that thrills through her in spite of all. Her quick instinct has told her that she has been spoken of lightly, either by or on account of Spencer Blythe, and that it is because of that her lover has hesitated to declare himself. She feels that the declaration has been wrung from him now by the foolish tears she could not restrain—that, in a more sober moment, he would not have spoken thus. She knows that he loves her; but she knows, too, that he wished to have placed her on probation, and resents the implied doubt. And yet her first feeling is intense joy.

"Berry, are you listening?" he asks, eagerly, impatient at her long silence. "Do you love me?—Will you have me, Berry?"

"No!"

The word is harsh in its brief coldness and self-repression, and he gives a quick, incredulous glance into her eyes. But the white lids are lowered and effectually cover them—only her lips, pressed tightly together, prove her determination.

He had never dreamed of this, and with a man's inconsequence, loves her the better that she is not easily gained, never doubting, even yet, but that in the end he will prevail.

"Why not?" he whispers, gently, one arm stealing round her waist.

She disengages herself slowly, regretfully almost as it seems; but her words are as uncompromising as ever when she answers—

"Because I never mean to marry at all—least of all would I marry a man who had doubted me and hesitated on the expediency of making me his wife."

"Berry!" he breaks in, reproachfully.

"It is true! Can you deny it?" she asks, stretching out her hands with something of an imploring gesture, as though yearning to be contradicted and proved wrong.

He is silent. How can he forswear himself even to gain what he knows now he would die to call his own? How mad he has been, and how blind! He can only cover his face and groan.

"Good-night, Captain Carew!"

"Berry, stay!"

"To what purpose? All has been said."

She is moving away, her head held high in the air with a new haughtiness and dignified pride; for has she not suddenly become a woman with a



woman's sense of wrong done to her, and unconquerable sorrow?

He lays hold of her gown entreatingly, but the little chance he has of detaining her is destroyed by the advent of Lawrence Le Sage.

"Miss Cardell, I am commissioned to bring you to Mrs. Sowerby. She wishes to speak to you," he says.

He has been taken from an exciting game of cards, and is too angry and impatient to speak with his usual affectedness.

For the first time Berry's name is heard as it really is.

"Cardell!" echoes Captain Carew, blankly.

"Miss Cardell" is the assenting reply of the other, with an accent of reproof.

Captain Carew staggers as though struck by a sudden blow, and falling back no longer endeavours to prevent Berry's departure.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"WHAT there is in the name to so discompose him Captain Carew does not confide to anyone.

"Perhaps he thinks it only a chance coincidence, or that a question might bring confirmation of what he dreads.

In any case, he is silent, and by-and-by, he and Berry by mutual tacit consent drift into their old relationship, for the time being friends and nothing more.

And as he does not urge his love, so she does not reject his friendship, letting things go on as they are, only feeling that she cannot bear to lose him altogether.

At times she feels indignant with herself for her tameness in thus accepting a half-worship and reluctant trust; but he is so humble and so reverential always that she cannot keep up the resentment, and the mere knowledge of his love gives such buoyancy to her spirits that each day her eyes grow brighter and her cheeks more glowing, and she is once again the same daring little gipsy that she was before her father's death occurred to sadden her.

Captain Carew is only biding his time, waiting for her wounded pride to heal, and to prove his penitence for the fulfilled doubt.

That doubt he feels no longer—he would stake his all on their happiness if she would only forgive him now; seeing plainly at last that a childish indiscretion is by no means to be confounded with a woman's falsity, or even the lesser sin of unmaidenliness.

The surrender is an unconditional one, and if it has been slow in its acknowledgment it is all the more abject. She might put her tiny foot on his neck and take her revenge with the utmost cruelty were she so inclined, for he is too gulfy in his own estimation to murmur at anything she might do.

He loves her so dearly, so tenderly, that he would give much to retract what he had said, or, worse still, what was left too long unspoken. Will she ever forgive that fatal hesitation which she could not but detect?

Mr. Blythe for once in his life is utterly non-plussed. By the light of none of his previous varied experiences can he account for the change in Berry's manner. A subtle coldness has crept in between them which, with all his vanity, he cannot attribute to pique, for his attentions are more constant than ever under the new stimulus of a rebuff; and, besides, it is such a gradual discomfiture he receives that it has come before he exactly knows what has happened, or realises how entirely he has failed.

If Berry had been the most determined title-hunter, the most artful coquette, she could not have adopted more potent means for riveting his chains; more than ever he is resolved to succeed, even though in conquering he might have to stoop to the concession of making her his wife. "Of course that is her game, little Puss!" he thinks to himself with a complacent chuckle; and after the manner of his kind likes her none the worse for the arts which are practised, he thinks, for his subjugation only. That he could possibly be rejected, when his heart and hand are seriously offered, the Hon.

Spencer Blythe has never been brought up to believe.

Mrs. Sowerby is not so hopeful. She has sense enough to see that Berry is not like some women ready to barter her soul for a title in prospect, and she has always feared the influence of Captain Carew, who from the first seems to have taken the girl's fancy. She can only wonder in amazement how anyone could hesitate between the two, and deplore that such a choice had never been offered her. Certainly she would not be as now, struggling on the miserable pittance that the Government allows, and trying to dress and live like a lady, while providing for the wants and necessities of her three little children.

"Impossible to live on a captain's pay!" someone had said once in her hearing.

"Not impossible, because we have done it ourselves, but oh!" with an irrepressible shudder that speaks volumes of disgust, "very—very disagreeable."

And to something of a like fate she sees Berry hurrying now, and cannot refrain from a word of warning.

"Look at me!" she says with dismal tragedy in conclusion, but Berry only laughs.

"Not a very pitiable case after all, with three dear little children, and loving your husband, as I suppose you do."

"Of course!" uneasily; "but still we are terribly, miserably poor."

"Something is sure to turn up!" is the reply given, with that wonderful hopefulness of youth which knows no fear and acknowledges no doubt.

"My dear, don't depend on that. Don't marry Captain Carew with the idea—"

"I am not going to marry at all!" interrupts Berry, sharply; and with the words still quivering on her lips goes on deck to where Captain Carew is waiting to put his fate to the test.

With a woman's quick instinct she guesses his intention and has decided on her reply before he has spoken.

It is their last day on board ship together. To-morrow they reach Bombay, and he has had, as she knows, urgent commands to join his regiment at once. To reject him altogether she has not the heart, although, of course, it would be the most dignified course to pursue; but surely she might compromise the matter, and impose on him the probation he had meant to have imposed on her. There is a sort of rigid justice in this determination that pleases the girl and partly satisfies her pride. A little half smile of amusement hovers round her mouth as she listens to his suit, that discomposes the young man sadly, and makes him hopeless as to his success.

"Berry, will you marry me!" he says, desperately at last.

She turns away her head, shaking it at the same time.

"You do not love me!"

"I did not say that, Captain Carew," with a mischievous sidelong glance, feeling that now at least the game is in her own hands.

"Then you do not trust me? Is that it?" he questions, eagerly.

"Did you trust me?"

"I know I was foolishly, utterly to blame, but Berry, can't you forgive me for it now?"

"I have forgiven you long ago," hesitatingly.

"But not forgotten!" he adds, reading her thoughts aright.

"No, not forgotten. How could I?"

"If you loved me—" he begins.

"Ah! yes, then perhaps," with another mischievous glance, that tells him the case is not so hopeless as he had supposed.

"Child, how can you be so cruel? Put me to any test you like, to any trial, only come to me at last and I shall be content!" he breaks in earnestly, and something rising in her throat warns her that she must trifle with him no more if she wishes to keep the supremacy she has gained, for tears coming at this juncture would be a terrible self-betrayal.

"Would you like to know my sister?" she

questions somewhat irrelevantly, as it seems to him.

His face falls and darkens a little, the old fear coming over him again. What if he should know her already, and that knowledge should stand between him and his present love?

"Your sister?" he echoes, uncomfortably.

"Yes, Mrs. Chester. If you care to make her acquaintance and would like to visit her when I am there—we—we—we shall be very glad to see you!"

"You mean I may go to you and plead my cause again?" he asks, with a short gasp of surprised delight.

"If you like!" demurely.

"I like!" with a happy contempt for the weakness of the words. "My darling, nothing could keep me away now, after the hope you have given me at last."

She raises her head with a smile that is meant to be a saucy disclaimer of so much meaning being inferred from the concession she has made; but somehow the smile dies away in a tremulous quiver, and the bright eyes grow dim with tears as she meets his passionate gaze. Her head droops again, but not until he has read all the tell-tale blushes have written over brow and throat. No longer has he any fear, and had the place been less public he might have completed his triumph by extorting an unwilling confession even now from the ripe and yielding lips, kissing the dew away from the thick eyelashes as they rest darkly on her soft, crimson cheeks. But for the time he must be content.

"I will win you yet," he whispers, exultantly; and Berry gives an excited little sigh, knowing well that, in spite of her brave defence, she is already won.

Mr. Blythe from a distance notes all this, and prepares to collect his scattered forces. He has no doubts about the matter under discussion, and he is keen enough to detect that no decisive answer has been given. It only rests with him now to go, see, and conquer, utterly routing the audacious enemy who has presumed to rivalry.

So it happens that to Berry comes that day which it has been credibly asserted comes to no maiden out of a novel—unless an exception is to be made for the life on board ship, where events are necessarily more crowded and contracted—she receives two offers of marriage on the same day and within the same hour!

But this second proposal, instead of softening her heart hardens it; and if there is a flush now upon her face it is from wounded pride that her consent could be so evidently taken for granted.

"You think I am only trifling!" he says, incautiously, noting her displeasure and not accounting for it aright.

"Indeed, no! I do not insult myself, nor you!" is her quick reply.

"I assure you I am seriously in love, and honestly wish to make you my wife;" with a slight composure that is engendered by the knowledge of the solemnity of these unusual circumstances.

Love has often professed and sued for its return, but this marriage is such a different thing. The mere mention of it almost damps his ardour.

"You are very good!"

"Not at all! I—I can't help it" ruefully.

The girl laughs aloud. His distress is so evident at having been forced into this extreme measure, and she guesses some of his thoughts.

He feels he is not doing justice to his noted powers of persuasion—not, as usual, carrying things off with a high hand.

"But, then," he says to himself, with a heavy, audible sigh that could not fail to injure his cause, "there are very few fellows who could extract amusement from their own funerals!"

In any case, what has he to gain? On one hand he loses his bachelor freedom, and at the same time binds himself to love one woman only (which on the face of it is absurd, especially as this one is not a real beauty—not a woman of the world—nor, in fact, anything like what he has hitherto exclusively admired). On the other hand, should he be rejected, his prestige is gone for ever; for that any woman should keep the

triumph of his rejection a secret is more than he can credit.

Only one comfort he has, that women proverbially exaggerate so on these subjects that there is just the chance that she might not be believed. In such a case, if such a case be possible, he must put a bold face on it, and make the best of his mistake.

She is laughing still; when, raising his eyes from where they have been moodily fixed on the scrupulously clean boards at his feet, he looks to her for some encouragement.

"Poor Mr. Blythe! Does it hurt you much?" she asks, in a tone of mock sympathy, pursing up her pretty lips into a pout.

"W—w—what?" he questions, blankly.

"This ardent devotion you are professing, this love you cannot help, and which has led you into so serious a strait!"

"It is scarcely a subject for jest, think!" he interrupts her, stiffly.

"Indeed, I hope it is! I do not wish to think it earnest!" gravely.

He is silent for a moment, looking her full in the face, and striving to guess at her real feelings.

What he sees does not reassure him, but he is grateful for the tact with which she tries to spare him the discomfiture of a more plainly-worded rejection.

"You mean what you say!" pointedly.

"Yes, I mean what I say! You know women sometimes do!" archly.

"I—I wish you didn't now!" he answers, bluntly.

But she only smiles, and extends her hand with a little frankly, friendly gesture that disarms him quite, and makes him wish more than ever that he could have gained her love.

She is such a child, with only a quaint, gipsy-like prettiness (no beauty) to recommend her.

That she should have the courage—to him it almost seems effrontery—to refuse his offer, passes his comprehension altogether.

He can only look vaguely about him and wonder if this is, indeed, the same world he has lived in till now, with all of whose tenets he had thought himself to have been thoroughly familiar.

Mrs. Sowerby, too, divining what has passed, shares something of his surprise. Although she had partly suspected what would be the end, she cannot even now quite realise that any girl could be so blind to her own interests. She will repent it, of course, *deus ex machina*, but the repentance will come too late, and those brilliant prospects she has now so recklessly thrown away will have vanished hopelessly into the waste land of memory—that mirage of those who are stranded in the deserts of despair, and waiting for no future, can only peer yearningly into the pleasures of the past.

Early next morning they steam into Bombay, and in the afternoon Captain and Mrs. Sowerby, with Berry, transfer themselves and luggage into the tender that is to take them to the station for Decolais, their first destination.

The two men standing on the deck of the *Arcturus* are watching the distance widen between the two ships with strangely different emotions.

Spencer Blythe is full of a vague, dreamy regret, for he scarce knows what; but Captain Carew is only conscious then of a great passionate hope at his heart for the possibilities the future holds in store.

## CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Mrs. Chester had telegraphed to her sister so urgently to come it had been without either her husband's knowledge, or his sanction. Not that perhaps he would have refused point blank to receive the girl under his roof, homeless as she is, but that he would have gladly welcomed any loophole of escape from this offer of hospitality.

He is not naturally either free-hearted or open-hearted, and setting aside this, his relations with his wife of late had not been of that kind to make him wish for the presence of any third party

in their home, least of all Berry, who, with her keen insight, is certain to detect their want of household harmony, and probably comment upon it with her usual impetuosity of speech.

That Eve, in his temporary absence, should have ventured thus to invite her without reference to his wishes or authority gives him good ground of complaint, and at first he positively refuses to go down to Lucknow, where the Sowerbys' journey comes to an end, and bring her up to the hill station, where they themselves are staying during the summer months.

Eve does not press the point; but as the time approaches, speaks casually of going in his stead; which threat, as she knows, will speedily bring him to his senses, and partially thrown-off allegiance to her rule.

He is inordinately jealous of his lovely wife, the more so as she has never professed any affection for himself, and he cannot think it likely that she will remain always so cold and untouched as she seems now.

Under this ever-present fear he grows more morose and self-contained each day, and a greater object of terror to his hapless subordinates, who cannot believe that most of his sternness is in reality abstractedness, and that they, even when under rebuke, are scarcely in his thoughts.

His departure to the hills is hailed with delight by all, even by the soldiers, who are only too delighted to serve under the milder rule of Major Lennox, he being as yet still with the regiment.

Lady Blanche brings her two babies, aged respectively two and one, up to Ram Tol for the hot season, and Mrs. Lee-Brooke soon follows with her little girl.

Mrs. Haller declares that she will "never desert Mr. Mowbray," or rather, in her own words, that nothing shall induce her to marit the odious term, "grass widow."

Mrs. Payne stays below, it is reported, for the sole purpose of contesting the right of seniority with the doctor's wife; others say that she has some wonderful girlish costumes only suited for the hottest weather, and that it is on their account she remains.

But all this is only conjecture, of course, and in any case she is not much missed, for the station rapidly becomes as gay as only an Indian hill station can, where the friends, who are present, take the place of those that are absent; and society has carried on in that free-and-easy manner which gives rise to so much scandal, and perhaps a little injustice.

A lady, whom circumstances have unhappily deprived of her legal lord and master for so many months or weeks, is naturally an object of compassion to the other sex; and if such small attentions, as are offered and accepted—in some cases innocently enough—are misconstrued, perhaps a little of the blame lies at the doors of those who are the first to accuse and condemn.

It might also be questioned whether a palace of truth would not be more fatal to the gossip, with which society is plagued, than to those whom they so remorselessly strive to put without the pale.

Mrs. Lee-Brooke is very loud in condemnation of the practices which have become, alas! almost universal. Not only is it shocking to her morals, but galling, too, to her vanity to see others that she, at least, deems far less attractive than herself so obviously preferred and chosen to be marks for scandal, while she is by common consent kept out in the cold of irreproachable immaculateness.

If by ill-fortune one lady is left a wallflower, or forgotten in some project for amusement, it is always she, and very puzzled is she sometimes to account for the same. No one gives more dinner-parties and luncheons, no one is more careful that the right persons shall be asked to meet each other, however she may deplore the miserable state into which society has sunk that such meetings should be ignored—even condoned; and yet laugh, talk and strive as she will, and popular as she always is among the women, by the men she is notwithstanding still neglected, even avoided, at least by all the oldest of fogies, or youngest of subalterns.

It is strange how men prefer the ugliest women to those whose chief propensity is gossip, and whose sole aim in life is to please; but certainly popularity is most difficult to gain, of all the things which ambition desires, and what is worse, a failure in an evident attempt heaped more constantly on the unfortunate faller's head than is worth the risk to win.

Eve Chester, in spite of her flatness and indifference, or perhaps because of it, pleases without an effort, and is soon acknowledged "Queen of Beauty"—the leader in every gaiety that is proposed and promoted.

Whether she is really happy at this time it is most difficult to say.

The change from poverty to such luxury, as is hers now, must necessarily be a great and a pleasant one, with the sole drawback—only Heaven knows, and her own heart, how huge a one it is—that all is owed to, and shared with, her husband.

His gloomy nature and suspicious jealous passion repels her more each day. Even her love for her little child is half smothered by the thought that it is his too.

Without love she could have lived and been tolerably content, for hers has always been an undemonstrative disposition; but this fierce and unwelcome tenderness that is forced upon her by fits and starts chafes her, and makes her desperate at times—utterly careless of what the world says, or where her own folly may lead her at the last.

It is March when Berry arrives. She has stayed some little time at Lucknow with the Sowerbys; but the confinement is so trying to her high spirits and healthy activity that she is only too glad to continue her journey, hot as the weather is, for any exertion.

The deadly quietness of the bungalow only relieved, or rather made worse, by the monotonous sound of the moving punkahs or the fretful wallings of the children, on whom the climate has already taken bad effect, is so unlike the dreamy sybaritic life that she had pictured to herself. Surely the hills must be an improvement on this!

She meets Colonel Chester with a certain new dignity and self-repression that impresses him, and makes him augur better for the pleasantness of their relations.

She is a woman now, no longer the enfant terrible whom he had dreaded and disliked; and though she will, perhaps, never attain to that degree of falseness which is well-nigh indispensable to good breeding, still her manner has undoubtedly gained in softness, and he cannot but admit the added charm.

He is so careful for her comfort and solicitous for her welfare during their journey, that a great deal of her prejudice against him, too, insensibly vanishes.

It is evening when they start, but only the gathering darkness tells that the sun has set; the air is as hot and breathless as in full midday. The mosquitoes buzz in swarms under the shady trees, and the fever-bird is croaking his shrill cry with hideous monotony, while in the distance can be heard the barking of the jackals as they wander about in packs, seeking for their prey. Altogether the night is so cheerless and unlovely that she feels no regret in leaving—only a pleasant excitement at the unusual mode of travelling.

The carriage, which is drawn by three ponies, is tolerably comfortable—flat, like a couch inside, and fitted with rugs and cushions, so that presently, soothed by the rapid, forward motion, Berry falls asleep, and does not arouse again at any of their frequent stoppages until the final halting-place is reached.

Then Colonel Chester comes to the door of the carriage from his own, and rallies her on her somnolency. It is early morning, and they are at the foot of the hills. A fresh, cold breeze is blowing, and as the girl jumps out wide awake at once, she pushes her hair from her forehead, and turns eagerly towards it.

"It is like a new life!" she says, with a gasp of relief; and does not know the full truth of her own words.

Only those can guess what the hill air means



who have spent the hot months below in delicate health, or who have seen the once strong men, and healthy children in the last stage of lassitude and debility, brought up, hoping against hope, fearing the worst. To them, indeed, it is a new life, like breath that was breathed into the nostrils of man at the beginning of the world.

Looking at her then, as she stands with flushed cheeks and parted lips, Colonel Chester sees in her—for the first time—a resemblance to his wife.

It is Eve's mouth without the cold expression which mars its beauty—the same thoughtfully turned head and slight figure, both nearly of the same height.

"How like you are to Eve!" he exclaims involuntarily, with a smile half humorous, half wistful; his voice softening, as it invariably does, when mentioning his wife's name, and then, without waiting for any reply, he turns sharply and enters the Dak bungalow.

Berry, liking him none the less for the emotion he has shown, follows him slowly, and ignoring the remark, expresses her amusement at her first experience of the accommodation afforded by Government to its travelling servants.

Anything less like luxury was never seen even in the homeliest country inn, for there, at least, they would afford you bed and bedding, and the more modest requirements of the toilet; but here there is nothing but a table, a few chairs, and a couple of bedsteads, guiltless of covering, and looking uncomplacably hard and uncomfortable. Moreover, the hospitality is limited, and after twenty-four hours' sojourn the hapless traveller is compelled to make room for a new comer and proceed on his way, not always rejoicing.

Colonel Chester does not wait for this contingency. His own hill pony—a sure-footed little animal, that is accustomed to travel over the roughest and most uneven ground with absolute self-confidence and safety—has met him there, and he orders it to be brought round directly their hastily-prepared morning meal is finished, and another without difficulty is procured for Berry. She laughs merrily as he ties a shawl round her short skirts, after the primitive fashion often adopted in the hills for convenience, and, on the whole, enjoys it all hugely. Everything is so new and strange to her, and she proves such an energetic traveller that the three days' journey is compassed in two.

The girl looks around her in silent admiration, when at last the Colonel announces they are in Ram Tol. It is a glorious day, and the scent of the pine trees in which the place abounds, is wafted towards her in a grateful freshness, notwithstanding that the sun is high still in the heavens. Below in the valleys the rhododendron trees are in a full blaze of crimson blossom, and in the distance the snowy range of the Himalayas stand out magnificently white against the deep-blue sky. The lesser hills nestle around a lake, which looks deliciously cool after the barren heat of the plains; and forms the centre of the small station: while everywhere about are dotted bungalows, seemingly almost inaccessible, on account of the narrow paths leading to them.

"In which of those nests have you hidden, Eve?" asks Berry, gaily, as once more they start on their road; and involuntarily her old thoughts of Colonel Chester, in his suspected character of Bluebeard, flash across her mind.

"We live farther out, but it will not be long before we arrive now," he answers, reassuringly, thinking she must be tired from the journey. "You are a capital traveller. I don't fancy Eve would expect us till to-morrow."

"It will be nice to surprise her," says Berry, gaily, and does not think whether it would be also wise or safe.

A large garden, or compound as it is called, surrounds the bungalow, and as they ride quickly on beneath the trees, Berry grows more and more excited at the prospect of the meeting.

Colonel Chester calls for someone to take the ponies when they reach the verandah, and dismounting hastily, lifts her off. Leaving her to follow, he strides on through several handsomely furnished rooms all leading one into the other, until he halts before a striped hanging curtain of

Oriental colours. This he lifts and motions the girl to enter first.

It is Eve's own room, and Eve, in a cool grey muslin gown, with soft white lace about her throat and arms, is seated in a low lounging chair, tea-cup in hand, while on a footstool at her feet is Ronald May, with the old look of devotion in his eyes, all the bitterness of his anger apparently banished for ever.

Even in the moment of their first meeting—Berry remembering all and knowing so much of what has passed—cannot resist a backward glance at the man, who, for better or worse, is her sister's husband.

At the first glance, he appears unmoved by any other emotion save a natural joy at meeting his beautiful wife again; but as he meets Berry's gaze, so evidently distressed and disturbed, his own countenance lowers, and a quick gleam of suspicion leaps into his dark eyes.

The next moment, Ronald May is on his feet, and greeting his Colonel with a somewhat embarrassed effusion; while the faces of the two sisters are hidden in a close embrace.

(To be continued.)

## AT LAST.

—102—

(Continued from page 319.)

They were forced to be content with this meagre explanation, and in pity left her in peace.

At first she looked woefully white and wan, but by degrees her former spirits and looks returned to her, and at the end of four years she was nearly her old self again, and had regained much of her old happiness.

This was due in a great measure to John Delbrook's untiring devotion and attention to her lightest wish.

At first, on her return, she had thought her presence would be disagreeable to him, and had consulted Judith about making her home elsewhere, but the elder woman pressed her so warmly to remain with them that she gave in, and dwelt at the farm, trying to make the best of matters.

By degrees she came to see what a noble, good man her guardian was, and to bitterly regret having thrown him aside for the mere fancy of a worthless scamp.

John was always calmly polite and attentive. If he hoped anything deep down in his heart—hoped she might grow to care for him again—he gave no outward sign of it; and she might never have known how dearly he still loved her had it not been for an accident.

One summer's evening, as she and Judith sat by the drawing-room window, they heard the clatter of horses' hoofs, and saw a horse career madly along the road, bearing on his back a woman, who was fainting with fright.

John, standing by the hedge, saw the runaway coming, and, planting himself in the road, managed to seize the bridle end check the animal's mad career, a moment which gave his rider time to alight from the saddle and lie on the road a huddled and senseless mass ere he started off again, plunging and rearing as he went, and striking down John Delbrook with his cruel iron-shod feet.

Poppy saw it all, standing with blanched cheek and wildly-beating heart at the window, and with a few bounds she was at his side, lifting the poor battered face, and pillowing it on her panting breast.

"John," she murmured, in an awe-struck whisper, "John, look up, my darling! Speak to me—in pity speak! Oh, Heaven! he is dead! My love, my love!" this last with a wail of anguish that seemed to reach his numbed senses, for he opened his eyes, glanced at her, and then closed them again.

In mortal anguish Poppy watched the men as they bore the two sufferers into the farm.

The stranger was not much hurt, and soon recovered; but it was only after a terribly hard tumble with death that Delbrook recovered, and

perhaps that was due in a great measure to Poppy's nursing.

She hardly ever left his side, and was the most devoted and attentive of nurses.

"Poppy," he said, one day when he had been brought down to the parlour, and lay on a couch by the open window, "on that day I was knocked over I had a dream, or a vision, or something of that kind."

"Had you?" she said, shyly, not daring to lift her eyes, for there was a new tone in his voice.

"Yes; I thought you came and kissed me, and called me your love and darling. Poppy, dearest," he asked, eagerly, trying to scan her averted face, "was this a dream or reality? Tell me, I beseech you!"

"It was reality, John," she answered, quietly.

"Then," he cried, joyfully, "do you love me?"

"With my whole heart and soul!" she said, firmly.

"And will be my wife?"

"If you think me worthy to be that," she whispered, humbly.

"Worthy, my dearest!" he exclaimed. "More than that! Come to me!" clasping her in his arms. "I have gained my heart's desire!"

And he had. He was perfectly happy.

They were married at the dawning of the New Year in the old church at Caple; and as his eyes fell on the tombstones of his ancestors he felt a thrill of joy as the thought that now he would not be the last of his race, and that, like them, he had a wife, and might reasonably hope for a son.

The following season he took his wife to town, as he had to go there on a matter of business—and loved her too well to bear her out of his sight, even for a few weeks—she having been left a large fortune by a distant relative; and one night, at the opera, Guy Levison, getting old-looking, fat, bald, and still a bachelor, having been jilted by the plump and wealthy widow, as he looked at the beautiful woman opposite, whose loveliness was now matured and most striking and brilliant, regretted most bitterly that she and her fortune did not belong to him instead of being the property of John Delbrook, yeoman.

[THE END]

## WHAT LIES BEYOND?

—103—

### CHAPTER XVI.

"WHAT would be the issue of to-night's work?" thought Alton Ayre, as, a little before the appointed hour, he found himself on the spot where he had promised to do the bidding of his friend.

Turning the lantern he held in his hand, its light fell upon the little wooden cross, and, secure of the spot, he threw himself down among the rocks, to dream away the minutes until the time came for action.

Two months ago, he had joined the gay party Claire had invited to Sea View, at her urgent request, and because he had laid out for himself no settled plans.

He well knew that Kate Mayhew was to be one of the guests, and he was also fully aware of that young lady's predilection for himself; but her little stratagems amused him, and really he had no definite conclusions but that he should permit her one of these days, to enmesh him in the net matrimonial.

He had lived his thirty odd years without ever permitting himself to be swayed by any grand master-passion, simply because no woman had awakened it within him. Hence he imagined there could be no experience in the future that he had not tasted in the past.

These two months had opened his eyes to the folly of such delusive reasoning.

Great Heavens! suppose he had awakened too late! Suppose Kate Mayhew had succeeded in making him her husband before he had learned the petty meannesses, the spite, the malice of

which she was capable, and which she hid so gracefully beneath her cat-like purr!

But was this all the reason for his thankfulness for his escape? What was this other motive power which awayed him, refuse to acknowledge it to himself as he would? What was it that had thrilled him as he had caught sight of Mona's pale, beautiful face on the day after her long night of watching beside Claire? Why had every nerve within him quivered, as he had held her for a moment against his breast, until it needed all his strength to lay her down upon her couch, and resist the voice that kept crying within him, "Hold her strong, and close, and forever! She is yours—yours by the might of your love!"

Aye, his love!

To-night the lovely face shaped itself out in the surrounding darkness, with that look of sad, unconscious yearning in the grand, grey eyes. "Patience, darling?" he said, aloud. "The day will come when you will need a shelter and find it in my arms!"

Then rousing himself from his reverie, he held his watch to the light, and started as he found its hands indicated a few minutes of ten o'clock. It was time all was in readiness.

Setting down his lantern, he began dislodging the stones under the cross.

"I feel like a conspirator myself," he murmured with a smile.

But soon the smile died away, and an expression of uneasiness took its place.

Already he had dug far below the surface, but nothing had been disclosed. Yet there could be no mistake—the cross was there.

"Why should Ffrench have buried it so deep? Still, he toiled on, until the loose rock all disappeared. There was a little stratum of clay, and then firm, solid foundation.

Great drops of perspiration stood upon his brow; his lips were livid as he held the light aloft, only to have revealed to him the debris he had caused, and—nothing more.

There must be some strange error. The light had been buried in some adjacent spot.

Again he fell to work, toiling with eager haste, until again was disclosed the impenetrable surface of the rock. Again, and yet again, and always with the same result, until a half-hour's precious time had been lost—a half-hour when Bernard Ffrench's life might be the stake, and his friend would think he had turned traitor.

But never mind that. He must act, not uselessly lament. Act! Yes. But how! What was to be done? What could be done? At least, some light must be seen. Perhaps they would not wait to determine its colour.

It took but a few moments to collect the little brush scattered about the rock. Lighting it, it blazed up for a few minutes, then died down to ashes, until he returned, piling on all that he had been able to find, and once more lighting up the heavens with its momentary blaze.

How long could this last! On these bare, barren cliffs no single tree grew. Had there been, he thought, in that moment of his desperation, he might have found himself possessed of power to tear it up unaided by its roots—aye, and plant it again, a blazing signal to the waiting ship!

Far and near he wandered, until he had exhausted all that would burn. He would have thrown his own clothes upon the flame, could they have been of use.

He seemed like a demon, incanting some magic spell, as his figure was clearly outlined by the blaze, ever feeding it with fresh fuel, to the music of the ocean, as it chanted its mighty rhythm at his feet; but the fuel now was gone, and also the sorcerer's power.

He was but a man again, feeble and hopeless. Yet not hopeless; a man still. His friend had gone to death, perhaps; but at least Bernard should not die like a dog, alone, unaided, and believing in the treachery of one whom he had trusted.

But where was he? where could he be found? Alton did not even know the place of meeting, but it was somewhere along the coast; it could not be far distant.

With eager haste he clambered down the cliff. On and he pressed his way beside the incoming hungry waves.

Oh, Heaven, that he might be in time! This was the one prayer upon his lips, when, simultaneously, two sounds broke above the dull roar of the ocean.

One was the sharp report of a pistol, and one a woman's scream.

"Bernard," save yourself! fly! You are betrayed!" cried a voice, acute with anguished terror.

Even in that instant of horror, he recognized it as Claire's.

Merciful Heaven! what could she be doing here!

He had arrived unconsciously upon the very scene of action; and not an instant too soon. In the midst of the gloom he could distinguish the figure of a single man, surrounded by many, fighting with the desperation born of love of life. But on his breast one woman had flung herself; another figure had thrown herself at the feet of a man, clinging with both arms about his legs, until he stooped and struck her off, with an oath. The air was filled with curses.

Alton raised his own pistol and fired in the air, when, as though they had sprung from the sands, a dozen armed men sprang among the contestants.

It was but the work of a few instants to cow the smugglers and force them to surrender; but soon a dread crept into every heart, lest surrender came too late, and the life of their brave young commander had been the penalty.

He knew nothing of the rescue, as he lay, white and unconscious, on the sands, the blood flowing from an ugly knife-wound, in startling nearness to his heart, while above him, staining the blood with her handkerchief, already saturated and dripping with the crimson tide, knelt Claire, forgetful of all but the man beside her.

"Bernard! Bernard!" was the one word which fell over and over from her blanched, quivering lips.

But, though tears started to many a manly eye, her own were dry.

Ayre gently approached her.

"Claire," he whispered, "My dear little friend, come home with me!"

She started at his voice, and her eyes blazed.

"With you?" she repeated, scornfully, incredulously. "You are his murderer!"

There was no time for explanation then. They must think only of Ffrench now.

The men, obeying his directions, lifted up the unconscious form to bear it to Sea View. Those remaining guarded their prisoners—a stolid, sullen-looking set; but the lieutenant, who commanded, sought one face in vain.

"Rob Foster is not here!" he exclaimed. "He has escaped back into the caves. Here"—detailing a guard as he spoke—"this entrance shall be guarded day and night. We will starve him as a rat in his hole, or we will force him to surrender."

#### CHAPTER XVII.

THEY began to move—a slow and sad procession—when Ayre, looking back, saw Mona standing motionless. The events of the past hour had crowded so quickly upon her, that she strove to recall her wandering senses, and ask herself if she was not the victim of some frightful nightmare.

Ah! had she not foreseen this moment, when she had said she felt as though she were destined to work Claire some harm!

Claire had barred her exit from the hut, and the two girls had stood looking into each other's flashing eyes, and down, down to their bared souls.

"He is my father!" Mona had said. "Would you have me let him die!"

"He is the man I love!" Claire had replied.

"Shall I give his noble life up for a criminal? I love him, although he has no love for me. I may dare avow it now, since you, to whom he has

given his noble heart, would have him also give his life—its ransom!"

"I whom he loves! You are mad, girl—mad! Let me pass, I say!"

"Never! But stay! Swear to me that he shall know only that he is in danger, and not by whom his life is imperilled, and you may go to him. Swear to me that you will lead me to the place, that I may find and warn Bernard, too, and that his name shall never pass your lips, and we will go at once together!"

"I swear it!" Mona had answered.

And, hand in hand, they had hastened through the darkness, the wretched wife and mother following behind.

They had reached the place just as the first pistol-shot was fired by Bernard's own hand—the shot that Alton had also heard. In that instant, Claire had sprung forward, and clasped her hands about his arm.

"Fly!" she screamed, "Alton Ayre has betrayed you!"

"Alton—my friend!" he repeated.

Then he cast his eyes towards the cliff, where the blue light should have signalled his danger. All was darkness.

With a deep groan, he strove to gently put from him her clinging clasp, and turn to meet his fate. But, what with anguish and desperation, she refused to let him loose her locked hands.

Even in that awful moment, a dim wonderment crept over him, as the perfume of her breath told him how near were her lips to his, and the persistency of her hold revealed to him something of her hitherto unsuspected secret.

But, with the swiftness of the thought, the smugglers, emerging from the cave, surrounded him. His life would ere this have paid the forfeit, but that they awaited the directions of their chief, whose progress was impeded by that crouching figure at his feet.

"Father," Mona implored, "go back—back among the rocks. I will find you out, and will bring you food and wine."

He answered her with a curse; but, as she still pleaded, he changed it into a blow, and she fell back, stunned on the sands. Then came that other shot and the rescue, but not before one man's knife had cut its cruel way into Bernard Ffrench's quivering flesh, and not until the smuggler leader, who had seen his cause was lost, had crept back, unperceived, to his den.

Again Mona lived over the dreadful, harrowing scene, as she stood seemingly deserted upon the sands. Her mother had fled back to the hut.

Should she follow or go on to Sea View? Had she not brought evil in both the cottage and the hall? But already Alton Ayre had turned back, returning to her side.

"Come!" he said, gently, "Bernard may need your care to-night."

Pitifully, almost lovingly, his friend's name fell from his lips. It roused the girl from her thought of self.

"You can speak thus, and yet you betrayed him!" she answered.

"I betrayed him! So Claire said. What can you both mean!"

"I saw the note you sent my father," she replied, her lip curling in scorn. "It was your writing. You did not even tear your monogram from the top of the page."

"It is false!" he answered. "There has been treachery, then. But we have no time to discuss this now. You will believe it when I tell you that my hands are clean at least of that sin!"

His earnest words thrilled her. Believe him? Ayre, though he asked her to believe at his command he could bid the waters roll back from the sands, or cleanse from her name the disgrace which this night had wrapped it about. One to him, in her sight, equally possible.

"Why should you care for my faith in you?" she replied. "Yet I am glad to know you were not false. I shall not go back to Sea View, Mr. Ayre, unless Claire sends for me. I think, after to-night, she will not want a smuggler's daughter beneath her roof. It was bad enough before;



but now—now—” and shuddering, she covered her face with her hands.

“Now, Mona, his disgrace cannot stain the hem of your white robes. Come, they will be waiting for us. Poor Bernard. Heaven grant that his life may be spared. Who could have done this thing!”

“We shall know one day,” she answered. “You must go, Mr. Ayre, indeed, you must.”

“I will not go without you,” he said, with an authority not to be gainsayed.

For the first time in her life, Mona's will bent, not broken by a blow or an oath, but bent with a feeling as of happiness in learning that it could bend.

“My first duty is to my mother!” she replied, very low. “Let me go home first, Mr. Ayre, that I may tell her of my father's escape from justice. Then if Claire needs me, if she asks for me, and you will come for me, I will return with you.”

She set her face homeward as she spoke, but to her amazement he turned with her.

“At least, you shall not go alone,” he said, and indeed, but for his strong arm she would have staggered and sunk down on the sands. He left her on the threshold of her wretched home.

“Try and sleep,” he whispered. “You will have need of all your strength. In the early morning I will return for you.”

Then he drew her to him, and in the midnight darkness, a kiss fell like a soft, fluttering snowflake upon her brow.

It was such a kiss as a mother might give a sleeping infant—a wife press on her dead husband's lips—but she who received it stood motionless, quivering like an aspen leaf.

To her, the night was no longer night, nor darkness darkness. He had kissed her, his kiss half falling on her hair, blown by the night wind, half on the low, white brow—ah, white for evermore, since he had cleansed it from its foul disgrace!

Then, with head held upright, she went into where her mother sat rocking herself to and fro in the cold and darkness.

“Mother!” she said, with softened heart, throwing herself at the woman's feet, and clasping both knees with her hands—“mother, speak to me! It is Mona! We can comfort each other, dear—”

“Comfort each other!” was the answer, fiercely spoken. “What was he to you, that you should care? But to me—to me! He was harsh and brutal sometimes, but, oh, Rob, Rob, ye were all I had in the world!”

“They've not taken father, mother. He has escaped back into the rocks, though they've set a guard on him, and I don't know how he'll get clear. But you have me, mother. Am I no comfort to you?”

“No! None! If you hadn't sent Paul away, he could have helped us now. Paul!” she cried, as though the absent sailor must hear; and in her own weary heart Mona echoed the cry.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Mona was out on the sands the next morning, when Alton Ayre returned for her.

“Claire sent me,” he said, coming to meet her with outstretched hand, and unheeding the crimson flush which mounted to her temples at his presence. “She wants you. Will you come?”

“Claire sent for me!” she echoed, amazedly. Ah, it is true, then, that last night was all a dream—a dream from which Heaven has sent me at last a merciful awakening!”

“No. Not a dream, since poor Bernard is still lying unconscious, and the doctor gives us little hope of his recovery. Claire is utterly crushed.”

“I want Mona—only Mona,” she says, to all who approach her. ‘See at least is true, and I may trust her.’ She shrinks even from me. Ah, I fear Bernard will shrink, too, until I can confront him with the truth; that is, poor boy, it is not all made clear to him in another world.”

“I will go with you, then, since Claire needs me,” answered Mona. “I am not wanted here.”

I think my presence makes mother worse. I have been down there”—indicating the coast line with a glance, while her face grew ghastly—“but the guards placed there last night are still pacing up and down. Oh, Mr. Ayre, is he hungry, do you think, or thirsty?”

“He may have escaped some other way, Miss Foster. Come, I am glad you will have to think of others for a time, and forget yourself.”

It was like his delicacy to make no reference to the evening previous. She could not have borne it in the strong glare of day. She knew only that he was near her, and that his very nearness brought comfort and strength.

When she reached Sea View, Claire came forward, pale and wan, to meet her.

“He is going to die, Mona!” moaned Claire. “Oh, I am so wretched—so wretched!”

“So long as life lasts there is hope, dear; don't forget that,” answered Mona, throwing an arm about her. “Where is he?”

Claire led the way toward the library.

“We had to bring him here!” she exclaimed, “and it makes it all the more dreadful; but it was impossible to carry him upstairs. Any further movement would have killed him, so a bed was hastily made up here. But everything sinks into insignificance now beside the question of his safety. Oh, to see his eyes unclose once more, and his lips move! Anything but that white, death-like calm!”

The girls had crossed the threshold now, and together approached the bed. There was no need to walk softly. The poor sufferer heeded nothing. One might think that already Death had set his majestic seal upon that unfurrowed brow.

Mona felt tears start to her eyes as she looked down on him, and yet it was on account of this man that her father was hunted down among the rocks.

“You will stay—you will help, no nurse him?” whispered Claire.

“Yes,” Mona answered. “I will stay.”

For three days, Bernard Ffrench's life hung in the balance. Each hour, almost each moment, it seemed as though the feeble light must flicker and expire; but, mere spark though it was, it burned on, while those watching it waited and prayed.

On the third night Mona was alone in the sick-room. The others, exhausted, had gone to rest. In the music-room, adjoining, Mr. Ayre had thrown himself upon a couch, that the faithful nurse might know someone was within reach of her voice.

He had wanted to share her watch, but he was so worn with his long vigil that she had begged that he would share it in this way, promising to call upon him at any change perceptible, or in any emergency.

She sat now, in the dim light, at a little distance from the bed, her head thrown back upon the dark background of the easy-chair, in which she half-reclined, her hands listlessly crossed in front of her, her eyes wide open, fixed on the fire, which was kept constantly burning in the low, open fire-place.

Now and then she stooped and noiselessly placed a fresh log upon it, which for a moment would flare up and light the remotest shadow of the room.

Every half-hour she approached the bed, and with gentle skill gave the necessary medicine and changed the bandages upon the fevered brow.

A change might come towards morning, the doctor had said. She had listened to his words with a sinking heart, dreading lest it might be the last great change.

Then her thoughts would wander off, to picture the guards pacing up and down in front of the wall of solid rock, behind which her father was entombed.

How must their tread strike on his ear! She knew him well. He would die there—a wretched, miserable death—rather than deliver himself up to justice; or, mad with despair, attempt to fight his way to liberty, and add murder to his other crimes.

Ah, had he not already done so! It was in the moment that he had burst from her hold,

that the deadly steel had pierced Bernard Ffrench's side.

Shuddering at the remembrance, she groaned aloud. All her present surroundings were forgotten.

In memory, she stood again among the exciting scenes of that night, when—oh, horror!—the same cold, chilling air she had felt once before again enfolded and enveloped her. Yet she sat motionless, as helpless as if carved into stone.

Within sound of her voice—ah, so near that even his regular, measured breathing, as he lay sleeping, could be heard—was one who would answer her feeblest cry for help; but though he had stood beside her, she could not have extended to him her hand.

What was before her! What new horror awaited her in the next few minutes! Each second she strained her ears to catch the first notes of the horrid laugh she had heard but once before. Might it not awaken even the dying from his unconscious lethargy! Why did it not come! Ah, something more terrible was in anticipation!

Still the current of cold air hemmed her in, paralysing every faculty to numbness and dumbness; but with it was a silence more terrible even than the mocking echoes of the demon's exultant mirth.

The atmosphere about her trembled. She was no longer alone in the sick-chamber, with the unconscious, silent form upon the bed. Someone—something—was sharing her vigil. Step by step it was drawing nearer to her. Inch by inch the space between them was growing less.

A mirror was suspended above the mantel-piece before which she sat. She dared not glance into it to see what horrid shape might blot its surface.

It was near her now—behind her—at her very side. She felt its touch upon her shoulder—a strangely human touch, she thought.

Then some power stronger than herself compelled her to look up. Slowly—slowly lifting her heavy lids—until her gaze met the spectral gaze bent upon her.

Yet not so! But, oh, more fearful yet than any skeleton, clothed in ghostly armour, was the sight of the two piercing black eyes, shining from a white—white face, compelling her to silence!

Had she gone mad, that the frightful unreality had become this hideous reality! For, bending above her, was the man whom she called father—Rob Foster, the hunted smuggler of the coast!

(To be continued.)

THE model sick room in a private house should be arranged when the house is built. It should be on the sunny side of the house and on the top floor. A hardwood floor, painted walls and open fire-places are its three requisites. It should open, if possible, by a swing door into a small entry, and then by a heavy, close-fitting door into the hall of the house. This is for the double purpose of keeping draughts and sounds from the invalid, and poisonous germs from entering the other part of the house. A closet with water, bath, etcetera, should open from it, with emphatically a window to the outer air. Awnings and dark green shades are preferred to blinds either inside or out. With awnings and two sets of shades, light and dark, the light can always be tempered, and easy-sliding windows on pulleys permit a proper adjustment for ventilation. Outside blinds are hard to manage if screens are in the window space, and inside blinds are additional germ-collecting surfaces. No carpets, curtains or hangings should be allowed in the apartment. One or two washable Turkish rugs may lie on the floor when the invalid is able to get about. The furniture should be very simple, a brass or iron bedstead, wicker chairs and lounges. In the case of non-contagious illness these furnishings are easily made more luxurious with cushions, etcetera, but as the chief aim is precaution in the case of contagious illness the sick room properly calls for a minimum of impediments.

## DON'TS FOR YOUNG PIANISTS.

Don't begin to learn the piano if you don't mean to stick to it, and unless you hope to live a quarter of a century after commencing.

Don't leave off sticking to it because your neighbours complain: neighbours are impossible people mostly.

Don't play on a decrepit piano—if it stupefies.

Don't buy a cheap new one—it is sheer prodigality.

Don't engage a cheap teacher—unless you can afford to pay him to look on. Then he might learn something.

Don't have an expensive teacher unless he's something more than expensive. Most of them are—they're idiots.

Don't have an idiot—that is, don't be an idiot.

Don't try to teach your master—damned him.

Don't neglect your scales, or when weighed you'll be found wanting.

Don't spend much time in adjusting your seat—your listeners may be sorry you sat down to it at all.

Don't think to disarm criticism by saying, "Oh, I haven't practised for ever so long." Ten to one it will be self-evident.

Don't play trivial pieces either when by yourself or in the presence of others.

Don't play with dirty hands. Dirt disfigures the keys and impedes your execution.

Don't abuse the pedals: if you don't know how to employ them, leave them alone.

Don't skip difficult phrases; rather skip the easy ones.

Don't take a piece in hand unless you mean to master it: if your technique is inadequate, put the piece aside until you are able to cope with it: don't boggle at what is beyond your present powers.

Don't be in the pitiful position, when asked to play, of having to reply, "Oh I haven't brought my music with me." Carry a few good pieces in your head.

Don't wait for repeated requests before you consent to play. The more will be expected of you the more you need pressure, and you may prove a sore disappointment.

Don't be dejected at slow progress.

Don't be conceited at quick progress.

Don't attempt to tune your own piano; you will surely make a mess of it.

Don't make a what-not of your piano.

Don't practise your five-finger exercises always in the tenor part of the keyboard—give the bass a turn, and so equalise the wear on the instrument.

Don't forget, in practising, that an ounce of technical studies is worth a pound of pieces, if the quality of the practice be right.

Don't regard your exercises as a dreary imposition: you can't be an artist without taking pains.

## ENTHUSIASM.

ALL true art depends for its purity and progress upon enthusiasm. Notwithstanding all the glorious revivals of the age in which we are now living, there still needs to be fanned into a flame this priceless spark—the spark of enthusiasm; that one spark that is necessary to life wherever it shall be found, lest that spark become entirely extinct, and we lose the wherewithal to light our furnaces, and so lose our greatest motive power.

We may exist automatically, like the stone that lies on the road; but that is not to live. To live is to be always soaring upward; ever striving after more perfection in all we set ourselves to do. Even the very plants teach us this. They ever seek to raise their heads up to and nearer to the light. Like them, we must be thwarted by no obstacles, and must not grudge making sacrifices—sacrifices of time, labour, money, popularity, pleasure, and other things of a lower nature that we may rise to a higher. No progress can be made without expenditure. But if we lose coal to gain steam, do we grudge the loss of the coal?

If our desire after perfection is a living reality, it must, in spite of all obstacles, struggle upward. In fact, it is this very effort that is the proof of the life. Such is the nature of enthusiasm: it is the very soul of progress.

Industry is not enthusiasm; it is merely activity, and may exist from base motives, and for base ends, as well as from noble motives and for noble ends. Enthusiasm is inconsistent with either a bad motive or a bad object; and, moreover, can exist even without action, if it can find no worthy object. Despair may reduce the enthusiasm of an Elijah to inactivity; but inactivity under special circumstances may be the surest sign of enthusiasm—paralyzed it may be, but still existing, and ready at any time to be again roused into action. The only true test of enthusiasm is motive. If we pursue any object, however high in itself, for gain or personal glory, rather than for the advancement of the object, true enthusiasm no more exists there than it does in a game played for the sake of winning, rather than playing it well.

Enthusiasm is that love for an object which exists quite independently of and even in spite of personal considerations.

Now, it is this very thing we stand so much in need of at the present day. Our serious work of life we reduce to a mere money-making machine; of our pleasure we make a business. The fault is the same in both. Let us do what we can love, and love what we can do; our enthusiasm must surely then be fired.

Some people object to being enthusiastic about anything, thinking that that object will absorb all their energies. This is not at all the case. The more enthusiasm you feel about one thing, the more you are likely to feel about everything else. If it exists at all, it permeates our whole nature. It belongs to us, and not to the object. Like every other faculty, the more it is used the more it develops. It cannot by use exhaust itself. A fire will, in time, even by the very heat it imparts, burn itself out; but not so enthusiasm. Its fires are fed from an eternal and never-failing source. Let us not then, miser-like, hide this precious talent, and lose both for ourselves and the objects of our efforts its vitalizing influences. To those who know nothing of enthusiasm, who have not felt this divine spark within them, I can only say, seek for it; but having found it, do not lay it aside in ignorant fear; rather consider the responsibilities of its possession, and use it as one of the most heaven-born influences that can animate your actions; for its life-spring is in These.

IN regions of perpetual snow, enormous quantities of this material fall and drift into ravines and rest upon hill sides. Day after day it accumulates until it forms a mass truly amazing in weight and bulk. As the warm season approaches the earth underneath feels its influence and water begins to trickle from below—indeed, in some places there are springs that never stop running. This perpetual moisture underneath and the weight of the snow causes the glacier to slide, giving it a motion of several inches during the day. In some instances these masses of ice and snow have been known to travel sixteen inches in twenty-four hours. By this means a large amount of debris and silt is carried down to the valleys, rendering them extremely fertile. The constant grinding of these glaciers cuts up and breaks up rocks and everything else underneath them. As the snow falls it packs, becomes warm from the sun, and settles together. This process long continued creates a weight that after a certain distance compresses the snow into solid ice. Glaciers drift with more or less rapidity, according to the conformation of the ground over which they pass. Sometimes the glacier becomes blocked between projecting points in the hills, then the accumulated forces may part the glacier with reports that are like cannonading, forming great crevices and fissures in the ice. Light snow falls over these, making them exceedingly dangerous to those who attempt to traverse the mountains.

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THE grave of an unmarried woman in Turkey is often indicated by a rose carved in stone.

THE Chinese detective force is a secret body, and the best organized in the world. They have an eye upon every man, woman, or child, foreign or native, in China, and, in addition, watch over each other.

WITH the natives of Burma it is a belief that people born on a Monday are zealous; on Tuesday, honest; Wednesday, quick-tempered, but soon calm again; Thursday, mild; Friday, talkative; Saturday, hot-tempered and quarrelsome; while Sunday's children will be parricidal.



# FACETIE.

HE—"I suppose you find a great many dull people here." SHE—"On the contrary, it is the dull people who always find me."

PARKER: "How does this Christmas compare with last year?" LANE: "How can I tell! The bill isn't in yet."

CLARA: "Are you engaged to Douglas for good?" GERTRUDE: "It looks so, I don't think he'll ever be able to marry me."

BOBBY BUNTING: "I guess that fellow must be engaged to sister at last." WILLIE SIMMONS: "Why?" BOBBY BUNTING: He has suddenly stopped giving me money."

JACK: "I hear that Miss Winks speaks every known language." TOM: "Must be a mistake. Last night I asked her to give me a plain English 'Yes,' and she said she couldn't."

A HUSBAND who only opposed his wife's ill-humour by silence was told by a friend that he "was afraid of his wife." "It is not she I am afraid of," replied the husband; "it's the noise."

ONE MARRIED: "Since I have been married I have taught my husband good taste." ANOTHER: "Really! It is a good thing for you that you did not teach him before you were married."

SCENE MANAGER (to lessee of theatre): "Our scene-changer wants a holiday. He says he hasn't been away for three years." LESSEE: "Well, tell him he cannot have one. He gets change of scenery enough here."

"I DON'T believe," said the millionaire's wife regretfully, "that our son-in-law has any business ability." "Business ability!" exclaimed the millionaire. "Huh! he married our only daughter, didn't he?"

BANGER: "I should like to see my son married." HOPKINS: "But he has hardly arrived at years of discretion." BANGER: "That's just it. By the time he arrives at years of discretion he will probably object to get married at all."

DR. PILLS: "Yes; old Millyns was on the verge of nervous prostration, all through worrying about his money." DR. SQUILLS: "How did you cure him?" DR. PILLS: "I removed the cause of the trouble."

"I DON'T see any mistletoe hanging in the old-time place," said George reproachfully. "Papa could not afford it this year," replied Grace coyly; "but I've got the ribbon in my hair I used to hang the mistletoe up with."

HICKS: "Bowers has been telling me some of his war experiences." WICKS: "I suppose you believed all his yarns?" HICKS: "Oh, yes; they were so uninteresting I'm sure they must be true."

MR. SUBURB (slowly waking up and rubbing his eyes): "What time is it?" MRS. SUBURB (looking at watch): "It's three minutes of train time." MR. SUBURB (springing out of bed): "Tell Mary to hurry up the breakfast."

YOUNG MAN (dining at his club): "Don't you think, James, that these lonely dinners at the club drive a number of men to matrimony?" WAITER: "Maybe, sir; but not so many as matrimony drives to the club!"

SHE (after a squabble): "If you dare write to me while I am in the country, I shall return your letters unopened." HE: "Very well, then; I'll have to use post-cards. And you know a country postmaster's wife has a good deal of spare time."

"How much, cabby?" said the gentleman who had just alighted. "Five shillings, sir," said cabby. "I am not so green as I look," said the gentleman, as he handed up the legal fare—three and sixpence. "Then I wish you were," was cabby's polite retort.

A few days ago a young man had the misfortune to be run over by a brewer's dray. It was not till after the wheel had scrunched over the poor man's leg and got some yards beyond that the driver turned and shouted "Look out!" The injured man struggled into a sitting posture and replied with bitter sarcasm: "Why, are you coming back?"

MOTHER: "I can't see why you should object to Mr. Goodsense." DAUGHTER: "I never could marry such a man as that. He wears the cheapest kind of ready-made clothes." MOTHER: "That is mere idiosyncrasy." DAUGHTER: "Y-s-s, but I'm afraid he'll want me to dress the same way."

"I THINK pa hasn't got much money this year," said her little brother. "What makes you think so?" asked his little sister! "Cause he was telling me that it wasn't right to impose on Santa Claus just because the old fellow was good-natured."

OUR new neighbours are very polite," said Mrs. Perkale to her husband, when he came home the other night. Mr. P.: "Are they?" Mrs. P.: "Yes; I sent to borrow their step-ladder, and they told me they hadn't one, but if I'd wait a while they'd send and buy one."

DR. JALAP: "I hate to speak of it, Mr. Stikkum, but seeing that it's more than a year since I attended you, and the bill is still standing, I must say that you are rather slow in paying." STIKKUM: "But you must remember it was a slow fever I had."

"ACCORDING to this cablegram they were married in Bombay yesterday," he said. "We must send our congratulations at once," she returned. "By post or cable?" he asked. "From what I know of both of them," she replied, "we ought to send them by cable if we wish to be sure that they will be acceptable when they reach them."

A CERTAIN lady had a custom of saying to a favourite little poodle dog, to make him follow her: "Come along, sir." A would-be witty gentleman friend stopped up to her one day, and accosted her with: "Is it me, madam, you called?" "Oh, no, sir," said she, with great composure; "it was the other puppy I spoke to."

BARKLEY SQUARE.—Hostess (giving a last look round before receiving her guests): "Why, how is this, James! The wine has not been decanted. What's the reason! Where is the butler?" JAMES (putting it delicately): "The butler, my lady, is in the wine-cellar (coughing behind his hand). He is at present suffering from an attack of—er—hiccup." "Well, but tell him to take something for them, and be quick to his work." "Your ladyship scarcely understands me. These are not Band of Hope hiccups."

A CHEMIST in Perth was noted for some celebrated pills he used to make. Their price was one shilling and twopenny per box. One day a customer came in and asked if he could not knock the odd money off, he being a poor man. "Well," said the chemist, "you look a deserving man, so I will." With that the man threw down twopenny. "The shilling's odd," he said, and bolted. The chemist rushed out of the shop just in time to see him turning the corner. "Ha!" he shouted, "you beggar, I have made a penny out of you yet."

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## SOCIETY.

It is getting to be the fashion to address and stamp envelopes on the back. With the direction written across the folds, the letter cannot be opened by an unauthorised person without the fact being detected.

HER MAJESTY has a splendid collection of tablecloths, some of which are covered with most interesting designs. One, for instance, represents the field of Waterloo, with the figures of Wellington and Napoleon faithfully portrayed.

THE Duchess of Albany and her children will reside at Claremont during the greater part of January, and early in February the Duchess and Princess Alice are going to Cannes, where they will stay at the Villa Nevada until the middle of April. The Duke of Albany will spend the Easter holidays at Cannes.

THE Prince and Princess of Wales are going to the Continent early in the spring, but nothing seems to be known as to the precise destination of their Royal Highnesses. It is, however, not improbable that while the Princess, with Princess Victoria, will join her father, the King of Denmark, for a time at Grunden, the Prince will go to Cannes or to Cairo.

It is not generally known that the Queen has an absolute right to control the custody and to direct the education during their minority of all the branches of the Royal Family. This is no dead letter law in the case of Her Majesty. She is kept constantly informed of all that concerns the education of her British grandchildren, and the names of prospective tutors and governesses, together with what is supposed to be their qualifications, are always submitted to Her Majesty before any appointment is made.

QUEEN WILHELMINA of Holland goes to bed at eleven, and is up very early. She makes a rapid toilet, and at once rushes out for a spin in the park, coming back through the stables. She wears for these morning excursions a rough Dutch "maute" in wool, out like those of her peasants in Friesland. She has a cup of chocolate brought to her room, and then proceeds to a very elaborate toilet, helped by two maids, who, it is said, do not prefer to all others these two hours of the morning devoted to their young Sovereign's embellishments. She has an enormous bed, tall, deep, wide, monumental.

THE Empress Frederick is beginning to dress "younger." Her Majesty lately had a most beautiful evening bodice made. A fulness of plain silk is gauged upon the lining, and it forms a circular yoke behind, and a semi-square yoke in front, each row of gauging being outlined with ribbon, and a frill of silk finishes the edges; then a seamless back meets the yoke with a silk frill and a triple row of velvet. It is pleated at the waist, and a sloop is shaped to the lining sidepiece joining it to the front. The handsome sleeves are composed entirely of silk gauged over a lining fitted with upper and under sections, and they have an upward pointed set of velvet bands midway between shoulder and elbow, and a circular set of the same round the wrist, where there is also a silk frill. Both the single and double-breasted halves of the front open in circular style on the yoke and pleat diagonally above the waist-line, being bordered with velvet and a silk frill, and closing first in the centre of front, before the right half crosses to the left side, and fastens beneath a rosette silk bow.

THE Duke of Saxe-Coburg is not expected at Clarence House until February, when in all probability his Royal Highness, with the Duchess, and their one unmarried daughter, will make a long stay and exercise their usual hospitality, which is always on a truly royal scale, as the Duchess loves entertaining in a manner befitting her exalted position. The Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha will celebrate their silver wedding *en famille* on January 23rd, and all their children and grandchildren will then assemble there. It is expected that the Kaiser will go in person with the Empress to congratulate his uncle. A deputation of Marine Artillery officers will also go over to salute their chief.

## STATISTICS.

A TON of coal gives 900 cubic feet of gas.

ONE swallow will do away with at least 6,000 flies a day.

THE life of a tradesman is, on an average, about two-thirds as long as that of a farmer.

To keep the whole German army in the field for a week would cost £6,000,000.

MORE accidental deaths occur every year in this country from drowning than from any other cause.

## GEMS.

DESPOKENCY undresses a man, hope invigorates him.

It is not what he has, or even what he does, which expresses the worth of a man, but what he is.

SOME of the best lessons we ever learn we learn from our mistakes and failures. The error of the past is the wisdom and success of the future.

ORDER is the sanity of the mind, the health of the body, the peace of the city, the security of the State. As the beams to a house, so is order to all things.

THE present consequences of our conduct are not all we have to meet. The lines of moral and spiritual law must run on through all worlds and states of being. The change which is made by dropping the body cannot arrest the effect of deeds done in the body. So far as those deeds were done by the mind and will, they work their results in the mind and will.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**BLACK PUDDINGS.**—One quart of blood and skins, half-pound suet, half-pound oatmeal, half-pint milk; a little powdered mint and salt, to season; strain the blood and mix it with the oatmeal, add all the other ingredients; warm the milk quite hot and stir it in, mix thoroughly; wash the skins in warm water and salt and turn inside out; wash again in cold water; fill the skins three-quarters full, tie the ends together, put in hot water and boil twenty minutes; prick the skins while boiling to prevent bursting.

**CELERY AND APPLE SALAD.**—Use one bunch celery, head lettuce, three tart apples, mayonnaise dressing. Wash and crisp the lettuce. Break the celery into stalks, wash, and using the white parts cut into pieces about one-half inch in length; should be two cupsful. Pare the apples and cut into dice. Mix together, arrange the lettuce leaves into cups for individual serving, fill with the celery and apple and dress with mayonnaise. Do not prepare the apples long before serving, as they turn dark after paring.

A PRETTY frosting for a window with an unpleasant outlook may be made with two ounces of Epsom salts in a quart of warm water. The mixture should be applied with a sponge which should be "dabbed" against the window. As the water dries, a charming frost-like pattern will be seen on the glass. The latter should be well cleaned before hand.

**ROLY-POLY PUDDING.**—The ingredients for this are: Half-pound of flour, five ounces of suet quarter teaspoonful of salt, one pint of fruit jam or jelly. Free the suet from the fibre and skin, and then chop it very fine; add the flour and salt, mix well, and add gradually sufficient cold water to make it stick together. Now roll it out (about one inch in thickness) on a well floured baking-board, spread the jam thickly over the plate, roll it up, and tie in a well-floured cloth, leaving plenty of room for it to swell. Put it into a pot of boiling water, and boil it for two hours.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

BAMBOO FENS still retain their hold in India, where they have been in use for more than one thousand years.

THE highest point to which man can ascend without his health being very seriously affected is 16,500 feet.

WHISTLING is practically unknown among the Icelanders, who regard it as irreligious; and a violation of the divine law.

PUPILS in the public school of Copenhagen, Denmark, are required to take three baths a week in the public school building, and while they are bathing their clothes are sterilized in a steam oven.

In France and Italy chestnuts are made into bread by the mountain peasantry. After the nuts have been blanched, they are dried and ground. From this flour a sweet, heavy, flat cake is made. It resembles the oaten cakes so popular among Scotch peasants.

THERE are many traits of character and custom in which the Arabs and Turks are our antipodes. They shave the head but not the chin, and we the reverse. With us the uncovering of the head in the presence of another is a mark of respect; with them a mark of disrespect. When they go into a place of worship they keep on the hat and take off the shoes and slippers; we do the opposite. They mount on the right side of a horse, and we on the left. They write from right to left, and we from left to right. We show our good breeding by taking the outside when we pass persons in the street; they by passing nearest to the wall. They do the honours of the table by serving themselves first; we serve ourselves last. If a friend inquires after your wife, you regard it as a compliment; to inquire after theirs is an insult. Their mourning dress is white, ours black. They finish their wooden houses from the top downwards, and we from the foundation up. The men wear frocks and the women pantaloons. We wash the hands by dipping them in water; they by having water poured upon them.

In Trinidad (West Indies,) the superstitions of the classes is a subject which cannot but excite a great deal of interest. If one sees a centipede, all that is necessary is to say "St. Peter, St. Paul," three times in succession, and the reptile is powerless to do you harm. A black bracelet placed on the wrist of a child will keep off the power of the Evil Eye. Or in the case of hicough, two strips of brown paper dampened and laid over the forehead in the form of a cross will bring speedy relief. The Obeah man, however, is the one most to be dreaded. He possesses a short stick armed at one end with a scull or head carved from wood and covered with human hair. With the aid of this stick he can cure any ache or pain, or, on the other hand, he can bring them upon you. If you should want to avenge yourself upon one of your enemies, the Obeah man, for the consideration of a small sum, will bring him bad luck, or maybe give him the toothache. In fact, there is no limit to what he is able to do with the aid of that wonderful stick. But the most ridiculous of all their superstitions is, that there are certain individuals in league with the evil one who have the power of casting off their skins and then flying around like balls of fire. Their plan is to suck the blood of those against whom they hold any animosity. The only escape from this dire calamity is to find the skin—which is generally hidden under a chocolate mortar—and sprinkle salt upon it. They can even tell you of instances where the skin was found, and when the finder went after the salt he returned to find that it had disappeared during his absence. There seems to be no end to their superstitions, and no one can shake their faith in the power of Obeah or the Evil Eye. On Good Friday the people march through the streets shaking castanets to scare away the devil, and the Portuguese amuse themselves by burning Judas Iscariot in effigy. These holiday frolics generally end in a free fight, and broken heads are a natural consequence.



## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. F.—Inquire at the War Office.  
 O. D.—We know of none cheaper.  
 A. K.—Inquire at Inland Revenue Office.  
 F. S.—Certain small privileges are attached.  
 O. F.—None but a dentist can do it for you.  
 O. D.—She can claim from date of engagement.  
 COURAGE.—It is, no doubt, in private possession.  
 H. M.—You could be compelled to give evidence.  
 THOUGHT.—You must employ a solicitor to apply.  
 ALFRED.—Submit all the documents to a solicitor.  
 H. H.—She can make a will in her husband's favour.  
 ALGY.—You are mistaken; there is no such appointment.  
 B. C.—She can name her own terms; there is no fixed tariff.  
 INTEREST.—The Japanese are said to be the cleanest people in the world.  
 IS TROUBLE.—We know of no public institution suitable for such a case.  
 GENTLE.—Ask a respectable dealer in such goods to make an offer.  
 B. G.—Such very unimportant events are not permanently recorded.  
 FRED.—As wages were paid by the week, the notice appears to be sufficient.  
 OLD READER.—The property was her own, she had a right to bequeath it as she pleased.  
 ALFRED.—Consult some educational bookseller; there are many works of the sort.  
 GENTLE.—Christmas cards first came into fashion in 1846.  
 CONSTANT READER.—The child would be of English nationality.  
 MARIE.—They are not of much value we should imagine.  
 ANTHONY.—The cost of a special marriage licence is about £50.  
 H. B.—It passed out of existence, we believe, many years ago.  
 OLD READER.—It depends upon the nature of the agreement signed.  
 R. F.—You would be entitled to a reward proportionate to the value.  
 HAL.—Inquire at the Emigrants' Information Office, Broadway, Westminster.  
 D. F.—The name of the county and town of Derby is pronounced as spell.  
 JIMMY.—The Gunpowder Plot occurred in the reign of James I., November, 1605.  
 A. B.—There is no Breach of Promise Act. Proceedings are taken by an ordinary action.  
 DEBORAH.—We should say tallow, with a little oil in it, is the best thing you can use, well rubbed in.  
 LAWDOVE.—No! such things are decidedly contrary to law, and you might easily get into trouble over them.  
 E. B.—Desertion of a wife for any number of years does not entitle the wife to re-marry while her husband lives.  
 DISHARTENED.—There is only one way of securing employment; keep on inquiring until a berth is obtained.  
 INQUIRER.—Flebotans was the name given to the citizens of Rome, as distinguishing them from the patricians, or higher classes.  
 GLEN.—We doubt if you could do much in a comparatively small town. You would have to go to a large city.  
 F. H.—The fact that the wife has committed bigamy does not entitle the husband to marry again during her life unless he obtains a divorce.  
 FRANK.—The correct quotation is "When Greeks joined Greeks then was the day of war." It occurs in Dryden's *Alexander the Great*, Act IV., Scene 2.  
 INQUIRER.—Ultimo, the past month; proximo, the coming month; current and instant, the present month.

GERALD.—The name was given to that wood because, when cut, it gives off a perfume like that of roses.  
 JUDITH.—Blue, green and certain shades of red should be becoming to you. But avoid purple and yellow.  
 DISAPPOINTED.—Of course, if the quality of cloth is poor, the result will not be as satisfactory as with a first-class cloth.  
 A. M.—It is said that the Turks were the first to bury their dead in cemeteries adorned with ornamental headstones.  
 GRACE.—A ruby of the best quality, of more than three carats, is worth more than a diamond of the same size and weight.  
 DISTRESSED.—We cannot tell you any remedy for eyelids that are thick and dark. It is probably a natural condition which cannot be altered.  
 BENNY.—You ought to be able to obtain the songs you ask for from the music dealers in your town. If he has not them, he can easily order them for you.

## MY LOVE.

Dearest each day to me,  
 Dearest to me,  
 Both my beloved grow.  
 No one as he  
 Can ever so perfect seem.  
 He is my only dream,  
 He is my only dream,  
 My only dream.

Never were eyes like his.  
 Beaming with love,  
 Bright as the dawning sun,  
 Soft as the dove.  
 Speaking of thoughts untold,  
 As they will love unfold,  
 Sweet as in days of old,  
 Sweet as in days of old.

Love beameth from thy eyes,  
 Love all for me.  
 Oh! how I do adore  
 And worship thee.  
 My heart shall ever be thine,  
 For thee my life will shine,  
 Thou ever will be mine,  
 Thou ever will be mine.

No one can ever part  
 My heart from thee,  
 Even though thou cease to love,  
 My love shall be  
 Still fond and true to thee,  
 Ever my love for thee,  
 Ever alone for thee,  
 Ever for thee.

W. B.—A mutual agreement to separate does not annul a marriage; nor does it give to such parties the liberty of marrying again without first obtaining a legal divorce.

HOUSEWIFE.—Towels are fringed by ravelling on a little of the edges and loosely sewing over the threads which end the fringes. Many people prefer this mode to hemming them.

G. W.—The lady generally provides the household linen, and it is generally expected that her touseau should consist of a thorough outfit for herself; enough at least to last for a couple of years.

FRANK.—James II. reached the coast of France, a fugitive from his own kingdom, on December 23rd, 1688, and on the same day the English Parliament begged William of Orange to take his place.

A. G.—Indian ink or lamp black are used in making drawings for reproduction, and there are other special preparations which may be obtained of any artist's colourman.

JACKO.—On first coming into sight the masts of a ship first appear, and lastly the hull—that is, of course, on a clear day, when the ship is seen at a considerable distance.

DONALD.—If ink is spilled on coloured goods that will not bear acids, soak them immediately in sweet milk, boiling hot. Hot melted tallow poured through ink spots will also remove them.

INQUIRER.—So far as we know, the phrase "Blood is thicker than water" appears for the first time in Sir Walter Scott's "Guy Rannering," in which Dandie Dimmont says, "Well, blude's thicker than water."

AMATEUR.—What is eaten or drunk by the actors on the stage is now generally real. The days of property banquets are gone, and the necessity for pantomimic art in appearing to devour paper-mache chicken or to drink cotton port out of wooden goblets has ceased to exist in up-to-date performances.

UNHAPPY.—We should think it is a very good thing that the matter has come to such a sensible conclusion. You are both too young to know your own minds, and two years will probably make a great difference in your feelings. If, however, you remain faithful, it will be a good guarantee of the sincerity of your mutual affection, and you will have no cause to regret so wise a decision on your parents' part.

H. B.—The term *schernu* is music applied to a light and lively, almost fairy-like, movement. It was greatly developed by Mendelssohn. *Muette* is the bagpipe. *Passé* is an old dance tune, originally the dance of the *first* boatmen; *Courante* is an old dance tune following the *Allemande* in the suite; *Harabanda* is also an old-fashioned dance, slow, and full of dignity; the *Gavotte* is a quicker dance of French origin, in common time, and often written in a minor key.

PHYRE.—For distressingly red hands, equal parts of glycerine, lemon juice and rose water may be applied nightly under gloves. Daily applications of lemon juice are sure to procure a whitening effect. Tight sleeves and tight finger rings are a frequent cause of red hands, and the only remedy for this is to remove the irritating cause. Smooth, white hands may be very difficult to acquire, but they are certainly within the reach of all who care for them sufficiently to make the effort required to secure them.

VERY WORRIED.—It really is not fair to your betrothed to let the matter trouble you so much, unless, indeed, your conscience tells you that you are in any way to blame for the state of affairs. If this is the case, you should make a clean breast of it to your lover, and leave him to deal with the other man. For yourself, all you can do is to avoid him as much as possible, and show him by every means in your power that you do not for an instant waver in your allegiance to the man to whom you are engaged to be married.

YOUR HOUSEKEEPER.—Scrub and spit into a pan twelve medium-sized potatoes, with just enough water to cover them, and boil gently until they are done. Pour off the water, and when they are dry, peel and pass them through a sieve. Now melt an ounce and a half of butter in a saucepan, slice into it two onions, minced finely, a teaspoonful of chopped parsley, and a pinch of celery seed. Cover, and let the contents steam gently for fifteen minutes; add the potatoes and enough water to make a smooth, firm batter, then enough milk to reduce to the consistency of cream; let it boil up once, season with pepper and salt and serve. This is one of the most delicious and yet economical soups that come to table.

OLIVE.—It cannot, perhaps, be definitely settled as to when playing cards came first into use. They were doubtless evolved from a very primitive amusement of some form. The beginning has been attributed to various nations. They have been known in India from the very earliest ages. The Chinese claim an invention of one of their first emperors. They are also traditionally ascribed to both the Arabians and Egyptians. It is most likely that they originated in Arabia at a very early date, and were introduced into Europe from the Orient about the close of the thirteenth century, probably by the Saracens. Historical mention is made of the game in Italy in 1299, but no authentic mention is made of the game in France prior to 1393. As early as the middle of the fifteenth century an active trade in cards had sprung up in Germany and Italy. In England the manufacture of playing cards was a flourishing business as early as 1540.

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